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THE STORY OF LONDON'S GREAT FIRE

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THE STORY OF LONDON'S GREAT FIRE

by

WALTER GEORGE BELL
F.S.A., F.R.A.S.

"If it was esteemed an honour among the Greeks to be born in Athens, if among the Italians to be a Roman, if among the Spaniards to be a Toledano, why should it be a lesse honour for an Englishman to be born in London?"
JAMES HOWEL, *Londinopolis*, 1657.

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PREFACE

THE case to my mind called for a major operation, and I have applied the surgeon's knife effectively.

It seemed best to retain the story complete of the Great Fire of London as it burnt through the city in those fateful September days of 1666, cutting off the rest, rather than to attempt abridgment of a long book which could only be unsatisfactory. *The Great Fire of London*, which has appeared in successive editions, is a long book. Fully one-half of its contents is taken up in describing the vastly important work of rebuilding the destroyed city, the legislation passed for that purpose, the measures adopted for meeting the distress occasioned by the catastrophe, the temporary housing of the citizens and the restoration of trade.

Those whose interest has been stimulated by the dramatic story of the Fire, here presented, and who may desire to know how the London citizens of King Charles II's day successfully solved the gigantic problems which confronted them, will I trust turn to the larger book, which is now available in a popular edition (10*s.* 6*d.*), with all the original plans, plates and drawings.

The flames destroyed 13,200 houses, the cathedral of Old St. Paul's and most of the churches, and substantially

all the public buildings of the capital. No other single incident in London's record of over one thousand years has had such influence upon its fortunes and its future as the Great Fire.

W. G. B.

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THE STORY OF LONDON'S GREAT FIRE

THE STORY OF LONDON'S GREAT FIRE

CHAPTER I

LONDON IN THE YEAR 1666

SAMUEL PEPYS, who was living at the time at the Navy Office in Seething Lane, near the Tower of London, tells readers of his immortal *Diary* that on Saturday, the 1st September, 1666, certain of his maid-servants sat up late getting things ready against the feast on the Lord's Day; at three next morning Jane awakened the household, to inform them of a fire seen in the City. "So I rose," he writes, "and slipped on my night-gown, and went to her window, and thought it to be on the backside of Mark Lane at the farthest; but being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off; and so went to bed again, and to sleep."

The Great Fire, begun in Pudding Lane, by London Bridge, had then less than two hours' growth. It seemed nothing. Could Pepys have known that no man would ever again see London as it was at that hour before dawn, doubtless he would have stayed longer, but he was little concerned by the spectacle of fire with which the populace were unhappily familiar. From the upper window the

city had spread out before him—a city of narrow streets and timber-framed houses massed closely together, losing all separate identity in the mystery of the deep shadows, and against the heavens a silhouette formed of innumerable roof-gables, carried upward at a hundred points by church spires and towers.

The London that perished in the Great Fire of 1666 was not the London of Charles II, but a city much older, with mediævalism borne upon its face. The distinction is often forgotten. Historical events hurry by, and never in such haste as in the first half of the seventeenth century. Fifty years only had passed since Shakespeare died (the 23rd April, 1616). In the plan of its streets and the elevation of by far the greater number of its buildings, the City of London survived exactly as Shakespeare had known it. Much had been added west; the unceasing creep of the town westward, which the Fire was destined greatly to accelerate, had started long before that portentous event. Shakespeare's familiar Bankside was altered in character, since its theatres had ceased to attract play-loving citizens across the river. But the old City within the wall, amidst which the Fire chiefly raged —that was the same, and in the Liberties the buildings destroyed were mostly standing in the poet's own day.

Shakespeare's London disappeared in the Fire—disappeared wholly save for a small area left immune about the eastern and northern wall, with relics like Crosby Hall in Bishopsgate, the Norman Tower guarding the river entrance and Barking Church near by, St. Olave, Hart Street, St. Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield, and

a few others beyond the limits reached by the flames, which have survived as witnesses of what Old London was. The fact will not diminish interest in the restoration I have attempted to make in the succeeding chapters of the London of 1666.

From any tall building, such as the tower of Gresham's Royal Exchange, an observer might have followed with his eye the complete circuit of the wall. London was still a walled city, to be entered from the Liberties only at the gates. Parts of the mediæval wall may be seen above ground to-day, a bastion being preserved in the churchyard of St. Giles Cripplegate, and there is an open length opposite St. Alphage, London Wall; but the wall in 1666 was high and solid, and in most of its two miles' length was an upstanding feature—higher than these remains suggest. In one surviving portion near The Tower, built into Barber's Bonded Warehouse, the wall is complete from foundation to rampart and bulwark, rising to a height of 35 ft. Could one again walk the streets so encompassed, much would be seen to remind one of Elizabeth and Henry VIII, much, too, of Henry VI and the great era of church building and restoration in the fifteenth century, but nothing of Charles II, whose return to the Throne had been too recent for his age to stamp its individuality upon the ancient city.

The Commonwealth had added nothing of permanence to London; the square brick tower of Allhallows Barking, by no means a bad example of this tasteless age, alone comes to mind. Nor had the reign of Charles I, shadowed at the outset by plague and marked by broken fortunes and civil strife, lent encouragement to civic

development. Of the period of James I a good deal was standing in the Liberties—of old time "the suburbs of London," and so called in a thousand documents—but within the wall the newest buildings were chiefly Elizabethan, and a great part of the City dated back to times more remote. The streets followed the lines laid down centuries before, and were as tortuous and narrow as you may find them to-day in any Continental town where mediævalism lingers.

The Restoration enlarged a cleavage already begun in London's life. Royalists who returned with the King no longer came to dwell in the City, finding their fathers' houses diverted to other uses or unfitted for their reception. They settled by choice in more pleasant and open places nearer the Court; about Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Inigo Jones in the previous reign had begun a great scheme of building, or farther west at Covent Garden, a quarter growing in favour with the fashionable monde. Henrietta Street bears the name of Charles the First's Consort. Some sought sites as far distant as Pall Mall, St. James's, and Soho Fields. The courtiers affected to despise the "cits"; and the merchants, still Puritan at heart for a large part, whose interests were narrowly confined to the state of the markets and the safety of their own souls, went about their affairs little concerned with the frivolities and licentiousness of Whitehall. They were less troubled with the unrighteousness of the age than were their divines.

Greater London in 1666 loosely covered perhaps twice as much ground as at the time of James I's accession, but it had spread west. Within the wall it remained

unaffected by changing times and modes, an ancient city still, and was so regarded by Londoners of that day, much as to-day we regard Chester or York.

St. Paul's, defamed and sorely dilapidated as it was, dominated London: its height, its mass, its position, chosen with the intuition of genius by its first builders, all contributed to this end. It rose clear above other buildings, the central object in the vision of London from whatever point viewed. Imagine the venerable fabric slightly longer than Wren's cathedral, with nave and roof somewhat higher, lacking, it is true, the majestic height reached by the golden cross since fire in 1561 had consumed the spire; then, to complete the picture, reduce the scale of the houses surrounding the present cathedral by one half. Old St. Paul's towered above London, and around this vast mother church, within the City's restricted area, were grouped the belfries and spires of one hundred and nine daughter churches.

The Dutchmen, Wencelaus Hollar and Vischer, and the few English etchers whose engravings have faithfully preserved the aspect of London before the Great Fire, loved to picture it from across the river. One sees in their drawings the artist's appreciation of a glorious skyline. One hundred and nine parish churches stood where to-day there are still forty-seven. They made London a city of bell towers and spires. That is the character it bears in every print, the first thing that enforces attention—spires rising from all points into the sky. There is this contrast between the two cities: London in 1666 was a town of low buildings with churches predominant, rising above them; to-day piles

of commercial offices, built still higher, have shrunken and concealed the remaining churches.

London at the time of the Fire is perhaps best known from Pepys's gossiping pages. With Pepys you live the City's life over again. He was one of the comparatively few men of affairs who remained a City dweller when the vast majority had gone west. He attempts no description; but none the less surely the *Diary* fills in what is wanting in the prints, which alone do not satisfy. They show the crowded houses, framed in stout oak and tiled above the gables, but no line on the etched plate suggests that London was then, as it has always been, a great commercial city. It might be empty or asleep. Pepys fills the streets with men and women. Lombard Street and all its swinging signs and groups of merchants are brought to mind when Pepys visits the goldsmith bankers there. Paternoster Row, narrow as to-day, awakens with life. It is after the Plague has died out that Pepys drops into Bennett's, "few shops there being yet open," to buy velvet for a coat and camelott for a cloak for himself, or with Lady Sandwich and Mrs. Sanderson moves among the press of fashionable coaches, seeking "a petticoat against the Queen's coming for my lady, of plain satin." He took his morning draught at any of the thousand taverns with which Restoration London abounded, and dined in the City, sometimes indifferently; worshipped at the numerous churches, not always with approval of the sermon; admired Betterton at the Salisbury Court Theatre, Fleet Street, above all actors. His coach, passing through the Shambles, knocked two pieces of meat into the dirt,

and Pepys thought himself fortunate to escape from the quarrelsome butchers at the cost of a shilling. There you realize the crush in Newgate Market. From the boat stairs by the Bridge he took oars, to Westminster on business or to Vauxhall for his amusement. All this is living London; but there is no trace that the stage scene interested him. Had it done so, we should have had a full view of the city destroyed in the flames.

London's restless, money-making life was grafted, with some incongruity, upon a city that was itself the result of the growth of centuries. On every hand were reminders in solid masonry of other times and influences. It was to William, bishop, in the first place, and to Godfrey, portreeve, only in the second place, that William the Conqueror addressed his charter to London, a slip of parchment bearing but sixty-six words that is now a precious possession at Guildhall. Mediæval London enjoyed a highly organized gild life; its merchants were its governors, and managed its affairs free from interference by any overlord save the King. But London's ascendancy as the commercial capital of the kingdom was built up in what was yet an ecclesiastical city, possessing an altogether disproportionate number of religious foundations. The greater wealth was always that of the Church, and it was evidenced in vast buildings, the majesty of which is suggested in the splendid fragment of the Augustinian Monastery that we know as St. Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield, the Carthusian House (the Charterhouse), and the nave of Austin Friars' Church, which to-day serves the Dutch Protestant colony in London for worship. The gilds themselves, standing

stronger by the destruction of this rival power, were able to acquire magnificent houses in not a few instances from the spoils of the Church. In every principal street were to be seen religious buildings serving a lay use. It required two catastrophic blows, the last of which was the Great Fire, to transform London into the wholly commercial city that we know.

The suppression of monasticism by Henry VIII had done much. The great Dominican Priory at Blackfriars, whose arrogant magnificence is bitterly recalled in Piers Plowman's verse, the windows full of "gay glittering glas glowyng as the sun," was brought to the ground, as was the Carmelite Priory at Whitefriars, the little Papey nestling within the City Wall, and much else. London was littered with ruins for years afterwards. The dispossession of the Abbot's town mansions, followed by the driving out of the provincial Bishops to their Sees, helped still further to change the face of London. But the wayfarer in 1666 still found at every important crossing a parish church confronting him, often two, sometimes three, monuments of the piety of early citizens; and besides, not all the great convents had entirely disappeared.

The house of the Grey Friars in Newgate Street had suffered little harm when, twelve years after the Suppression, it was refitted under Edward VI's gift for the education of poor children as Christ's Hospital; indeed, the cloistered settlement stood practically intact when the Fire struck it. Parishioners used the chancel of its church for worship; the vast preaching nave filled a utilitarian purpose as a warehouse, and there the

Stationers had stored a part of the great accumulation of books that perished in the Fire of London. Large parts of the Carthusian Monastery, some of great age, survive to-day. The refectory of Austin Friars served the Pinners Company as their hall. The chapel of Elsing Spital became the parish church of St. Alphage, London Wall. The church built by the Knights Templars in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries happily stands unharmed, safe kept by the lawyers.

The great fortress of The Tower guarded the river approach, but this and St. Paul's apart, London's public buildings had small distinction. London was not, and has never been, a magnificent city. Indeed, the poverty of its buildings formed the subject of slighting comment by many travellers, accustomed to the artistic splendours of Toledo, of Venice, of Florence and Rome. The ancient Guildhall, the seat of civic government, was hemmed about with houses and hidden from sight, with no approach until Sir Christopher Wren, after the Great Fire, cut out King Street to open it to Cheapside. Access before that time was restricted to Lawrence Lane and Ironmonger Lane, passages so mean and narrow that in neither could two vehicles pass. Leadenhall enjoyed a better site, as might be expected, for there had stood a Roman building, believed by Sir Laurence Gomme to have been the Forum, stones of which still lie in the soil beneath the Market. The Royal Exchange, which Queen Elizabeth, in compliment to the donor, Sir Thomas Gresham, had so named in person, was a worthy ornament of the City. Blackwell Hall, the City's cloth market, and the Custom House, dating from Elizabeth's reign,

are but little known from the writings of contemporaries, who probably found little in them worthy of record.

Large mansions of noblemen, replacing the ecclesiastics, remained along the Strand, extending west, with the river frontage to their gardens.

There were, besides, considerable numbers to be found within the City, built by nobles or wealthy merchant adventurers; but Aldersgate Street, where Petre House, Thanet House, Lauderdale House, and others were situated, almost alone remained a place of City residence of the old noble families. Many large mansions, after years of neglect, had been divided into tenements, and thus helped to house London's population, but for others, both lay and religious, a kindlier fate had been reserved when they passed into the possession of the Livery Companies. This fact in its bearing upon London at the time of the Fire has never received the prominence it merits, for amid much else that was drab they played no small part in giving to the City that aspect of picturesque antiquity which thereafter was lost.

Some had become corporate property by gift of wealthy members of the Companies benefited. Such was Paynter Stainers Hall in Trinity Lane, Queenhithe, which originally was the residence of Sir John Brown, Serjeant Paynter to King Henry VIII. Salters Hall had been the town mansion of the Earl of Oxford. The larger halls had been acquired by purchase, mostly after confiscation by the Crown. Drapers Hall, in Throgmorton Street,—its large garden had the last bowling green maintained in the City—was the house of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, which had fallen to the Crown

upon his attainder and execution on Tower Hill. The Mercers Company took for their hall the property of the religious College of St. Thomas of Acon, at the Poultry entrance to Cheapside, which fell into Henry VIII's hands at the Suppression. The Leathersellers Company fitted up as their hall the refectory of the priory of Benedictine nuns of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate.

What alone I wish now to impress is that London in 1666 still possessed numbers of its historic houses, in excellent preservation, some amongst them being the most ancient buildings in the City, and these were destroyed by the Fire. Actually only three Companies' Halls had the water frontage, but a majority lay near the Thames side or else were clustered about Guildhall. The picturesqueness of the old City which the flames devastated, consuming 13,200 houses, must not dull our sense to the fact that much of it was mean and squalid. Its tortuous ways, dark and evil-smelling, and constant obstructions to the slow moving traffic, provoked the satire of Sir William Davenant a few years before the Fire. "Sure (says he) your ancestors contrived your narrow streets in the days of wheelbarrows, before those greater engines, carts, were invented." The stranger in London, in haste to be gone, found it unsafe to use the new public hackney coaches "till the quarrel be decided whether six of your nobles, sitting together, shall stop and give way to as many barrels of beer."

London had always been crowded; Restoration London was densely overcrowded, even after the Plague had reduced the numbers. The wars being ended and the armies disbanded, old soldiers came to the metropolis to

set up trades, their families with them. With the monarchy again firmly established, a large train of people followed the return of the Court, attending it to obtain rewards for services, preferments, and the like. There was a new era of reckless extravagance unknown in the dour days of the Commonwealth. Luxury and fashion again ran riot, and to minister to the wants of the time tradesmen in hundreds came to settle in business and take their profits out of the money now freely circulating. The Royal Exchange shops had become the City's bazaar for rare goods brought from every quarter of the world. They were never before so busy. Defoe, who was six years of age when the Great Plague broke out in 1665, and had some knowledge, computed that there were then in London above one hundred thousand more people than ever it had held before.

In this old City made up of fragments of the past, of densely packed timber-framed houses, red tiled, built about a web of cobbled streets, grown out beyond its encircling wall and badly wanting space, was carried on the greatest manufacturing and commercial business in the kingdom.

John Evelyn, the diarist, was walking one day in the well-kept grounds of Whitehall Palace when a cloud of smoke came up from the direction of London, which so invaded the Court that all the rooms, galleries and places about it were filled and infected. Men could hardly discern one another for the cloud, and none could suffer it without choking. Indignant, he wrote his *Fumifugium; or the Inconveniencie of the Aer and Smoak of London*

Dissipated, proposing remedies. The King, taking him aside, warmly commended the work, and commanded him to prepare a Bill against the next session of Parliament, "being, as he said, resolved to have something done in it." The monarch was careless, the Parliament engrossed with other affairs. Five years later the Fire made way for the reform more effectively than either could have done.

The smoke cloud over London was not infrequent, rising from the furnaces lighted by soap-boilers, dyers, brewers, and lime-burners, who pursued their noisome trades, not at distant factories or in an outer ring, but within the City itself. "It is this horrid smoke," writes Evelyn, "which obscures our churches and makes our palaces look old, which fouls our clothes and corrupts the waters, so that the very rain and refreshing dews which fall in the several seasons precipitate this impure vapour, which with its black and tenacious quality spots and contaminates whatever is exposed to it." He bitterly complains that the gardens around London no longer bore fruit, instancing especially Lord Bridgwater's orchard at Barbican and the Marquis of Hertford's in the Strand. I think it likely that Evelyn's offended sense led him to exaggerate, but the chimneys belching smoke and the soot-blackened buildings recall an aspect of industrial London at the Restoration that is seldom thought of.

In general terms, London within the Wall remained a mediæval city, displaying a good deal of the handiwork of builders of James I and Elizabeth, but not obtrusively, for there was no violent clashing in the simple architectural

styles. If individually the houses were narrow, low, and mean, as we know for the greater part they were, they formed together a wholly agreeable *mise-en-scène.* Although a jumble of shapes and heights, one and all were built for a common purpose, which gave consistency to the town—that of the private dwellings of citizens. Little survives to-day that will help us to reproduce London before the Great Fire, but four buildings may be cited as types which were duplicated a thousand times in the city destroyed by the flames. One or other will be known to every haunter of City streets. They are the timber front of Staple Inn (*circa* 1570), No. 17, Fleet Street (James I), the houses with projecting plaster fronts in Middle Temple Lane, and that fine early Stuart example, the Old Dick Whittington in Cloth Fair, now no more than a pleasant memory.

These would be found in the better streets. A fifth type might be added—important, too, because once so numerous—in the weather-boarded shanty dwellings in Cloth Fair, but these have been destroyed in recent years.

Much had been done since James I's accession to encourage the use of brick, but it was still unusual within the City, save in the few recent buildings.[1] Party walls were all supposed to be of stone or brick, a precaution against the spread of fire dating back as far as FitzAlwyn's Assize in 1189; London's first Building Act given by

[1] Cf. *State Papers* (*Domestic*), 1624, July 5. It was not solely because of danger of fire that timber building was discouraged, but also "by reason that all great and well grown woods are much spent and wasted, so as timber for shipping waxed scarce." (*Royal Proclamation*, 1605.)

London's first Mayor. The precaution was very partially observed. The house fronts were constructed of stout timber frames, raised upon a stone or brick foundation, and filled in with laths, which in turn were covered with rough plaster. The storeys projected one beyond another up to the steep gables, to afford weather protection. The plan darkened the already narrow streets, and brought opposite houses closely together. Ben Jonson illustrates this feature of the town in his play, *The Devil is an Asse*, where the lady and her lover speak softly to one another from the windows of contiguous buildings.

The City had nothing in common with what we know to-day. The substantial merchant who lived about Cornhill, Throgmorton Street, Lombard Street, and the close purlieus surrounding the Royal Exchange, or, having shipping interests, resided in Tower Street, had the apartments devoted to his counting house on the street level, and his warehouse very likely built in the rear or at the side; he dwelt with his household in the rooms above. The mercer of Paternoster Row, and, indeed, the shopkeeper everywhere, traded indoors. Sometimes he built out a pent-house to the street, but he did not make his great display in front, nor did he expect his goods to be seen from outside. This did not mean that the streets were empty. The case was far otherwise. The apprentices were vociferous, stationed at every shop door. "What d'ye lack? What is't ye lack, ladies?"—their cry rang through London for centuries. Hawkers did a large and popular trade. Stalls, stools, and baskets encumbered the City streets, in such numbers that a pedestrian had often to pick his way through. They

caused so much obstruction that in 1626 one Nicholas Lisle had proposed raising revenue for the King's service by taxing them, and after the Fire there was clamour for their wholesale removal in the interests of legitimate traders.

It was not a pleasant place to live in, this City which was more than full of people. Where a man had business, there his life was spent, and with him were his wife and often a large family of children, and his assistants and apprentices, all in one household. This made every street populous. Stuart London was, too, excessively noisy. London's vibrating note, which Lowell likened to "the roaring loom of time," has been attuned to many keys, but never has this been a silent city.

The streets were paved with egg-shaped cobble-stones beaten in with sand and gravel, extending the full width from house to house. There were no raised side-walks. Even the small protection to pedestrians from passing traffic afforded by the "massy" posts which it was Dr. Johnson's habit, in a later age, to finger nervously as he walked down Fleet Street, was given only in a few of the broader highways. We know how ill-kept the City streets were a century later; the paving rough and irregular by frequent patching; footways, still not raised above the road level, covered with mud and often overflowed with water, the narrow space encroached upon by shop-windows, show-boards, vaults and cellar doors; locomotion, even in important thoroughfares, obstructed by the washing of butts and casks; [1] and the conditions were worse, not better, before the Fire.

[1] Report by Commissioners of Sewers, 1765, Nov. 15.

A length of freestone before the shops was rare. An open kennel ran down the centre or sides of each street, with many cross-channels, into which householders threw their kitchen water and refuse and garbage, to be carried along by the next shower. It then accumulated, with many additions swept out of the houses, till the scavengers made a clearance, heaping the refuse high in poisonous laystalls about the City's outskirts or along the river banks, to rot under the influence of sun and weather. I found complaints at the wardmote inquests of liquid from manure-heaps flowing out from City inn-yards to the highway, of loosened roof-gutters from which a deluge of filthy water after rainfall descended on passers-by, making a continual wet day after the storm was over, of broken pavements, and conditions of dirt and squalor that seem hardly conceivable.

A couple of years after the Fire a Mayoral Proclamation condemned the "intolerable foulness" of the streets in that part of the City left standing, with evil consequences to its trade, health, and government. If the scavengers had done their work effectively, still they could not have cleansed the houses, the real source of every infection. Malcolm, the antiquary, has said: "This subject may be allowed to be familiar to me, and I have, perhaps, had more than common means of judging; and I now declare it to be my full and decided opinion, that London was burnt by Government to annihilate the Plague, which was grafted in every crevice of the hateful old houses consumed in the Fire." An historian cannot accept the conclusion, but the savagery of the passage is enlightening.

Then the graveyards—one shudders to think of them! The crowded city buried its dead in its own soil, and the harvest of victims of the Great Plague the previous year had been sown thickly till the choked ground could hold no more, and bodies were flung unceremoniously into loathsome plague-pits out in the suburbs. Even to-day the churchyards of St. Swithin's, of St. Laurence Pountney, and many others show plainly that the surface has been raised to its present height above the surrounding land by the process of finding room for additional burials.

London in 1666 enjoyed one advantage for healthy life. It was better served with water than ever before, the New River Company's supply being distributed over a large part of the northern and central area, supplementing the services of the springs and wells, though the riverside quarter still remained dependent upon the Thames.[1] But in sewerage and general sanitation it had made little advance. Lord Keeper Guilford, at his great house in Chancery Lane (in 1672) found his cellar obnoxious by reason that all the drainage of the mansion went into a small well there, and we are naïvely told that "when it was full a pump went to work to carry it into the open kennel of the street!" The City's rank smells were notorious. The town ditch, too nauseous

[1] After the Fire the grandchildren of the original Moris rebuilt the Thames water wheels and restored the river supply at a cost of £2,000, borrowed from future profits. The New River Company then projecting an extension of their pipes to the waterside district, they petitioned the King not to allow it, as such competition would involve ruin of their enterprise. (*State Papers, Domestic*, 1667–8, p. 112.)

for the none too fastidious sense of the Elizabethan citizen, had been filled in, but on the west, below Ludgate, there was still tolerated an uncovered sewer of outrageous filthiness in the Fleet River.

In the populous city, with its commerce, its shipping, its manufactories, its manifold activities, and its ever pressing want of space, room had to be found for the poor, always the largest numbers. Small care was given to them. The meaner dwellings, built back to back, had often a mere casing of weather-boards fastened to their shaking frames. A smear of black pitch made the only water-proofing. These were the homes of thousands of London's toiling populace—two rooms, or at most three, dark, stuffy, and horribly insanitary. Narrow and filthy alleys, without pretence of paving and often ankle-deep in mud, gave the only access. Wanting even such accommodation as this, other thousands were forced to find refuge in underground rooms. Others, again, were herded into tenements, falling rapidly into ruin by wilful destruction and want of repair.

The overcrowding was scandalous. A small house in Dowgate Ward had been reported as accommodating eleven married couples and fifteen single persons; another house of ten rooms in Silver Street sheltered ten families, divers of whom had lodgers. The conversion of old mansions was typified in the Whitefriars precinct, the dissolute sanctuary of Alsatia, where Sir John Parker's house stood, divided into no fewer than twenty tenements, and that of one Francis Pyke into thirty-nine tenements. Fifty other examples might be cited.

Count Cominges, the French Ambassador till the war

at the Court of Charles II, found London a great and wealthy city, but its large population dwelt in houses mostly only two storeys high. "However (says he), this is compensated by the existence under them of cellars so full of poor people who live only by their toil that it would be difficult to try to give their exact number." [1] He declares that the best informed spoke of a London population in 1665 of 600,000. It is difficult to estimate the actual numbers of City dwellers, excluding those west, but figures of the year 1631 afford some guidance —and bewilderment. A census of mouths to feed was then taken by Sir Robert Ducie, the Lord Mayor, by order of the Privy Council, when apprehensive of a time of approaching scarcity. It was found that there were 71,029 men, women and children dwelling within the Wall and 59,239 in the Liberties. The population had enormously increased in density in the intervening thirty-five years, especially in the Liberties, by this time closely built over; otherwise how shall one account for the stark fact that in the Plague year of 1665 there were 56,558 deaths within the area of the Lord Mayor's jurisdiction? [2] In Greater London, thinly distributed over the much larger area of Westminster City and Liberties, the enormous parish of Stepney, and the out-parishes, there was another population probably equalling that of the City.

[1] *Relation de l'Angleterre en l'année* 1666 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS. Fr. 15889). See Jusserand, "A French View of England in 1666," in *The Nineteenth Century*, April, 1914.

[2] Bills of Mortality, 1665. The figures are not exact for the City population, as they include deaths in the pest-houses to which many persons were brought from the out-parishes.

It is a popular superstition that the Fire, scorching the ground deep down, burnt out the Plague harboured in the soil, which never thereafter appeared in the metropolis. The good work that the Fire accomplished was to burn out the decaying, rat-haunted, and horribly insanitary houses, and to purge with flame the unwholesome conditions under which the citizens had been compelled to live. The London which arose under the new Building Acts was different in everything that counts for the welfare of human life. I am no enthusiast for such wholesale destruction as the Fire occasioned of historical things which later generations value, but for the health of London the Fire was a crowning mercy.

I have shirked nothing in recapitulating the evils of the old City, full ready as it was for destruction, its dirt, overcrowding, squalor, and general unwholesomeness. When all has been admitted, London with its one hundred and nine churches rising amidst the timber-framed houses and innumerable gables, the steel-grey fortress of The Tower at the water gate and palaces beyond, was a delight to the eye. Its coarser detail, concealed in the dense masses of its buildings, only becomes known when one penetrates the narrow streets, and the vision that lingers is that of the prints—a City of shallow depth and of many spires built on rising ground along the river bank. It was essentially a City by the river; the Thames flowing by in full flood which had been the determining cause of the original foundation of London, which still we see only imperfectly out of the mists. The houses nowhere stretched far from the water. Stuart London lived dependent upon the Thames in a sense that modern

citizens find it difficult to realize. Open, broad, and healthy, with hundreds of two-oared wherries at the public call, this (and not its mean streets) was London's real highway.

Contrasting Restoration London and the London of to-day, Mr. Lubbock, a recent biographer of Pepys, says truly—

It is not merely that the red roofs and gables have vanished, nor even that the clear air has become thickened and stained. It is rather that the actual point of view has shifted with the abandonment of the one great curving majestic street which old London possessed, and which, for æsthetic value, modern London has done nothing to replace. Two hundred years ago London life centred round its beautiful waterway almost as much as Venice itself, and the Thames was simply a wider and ampler Grand Canal. Its single bridge, clustered with shops, stood on a long line of narrow arches, through which the piled-up stream poured in tumultuous rapids. Above and below, the river was sprinkled with boats and barges, while on either bank London and Southwark faced each other across the water, not entrenched behind embankments or blank warehouses, but pushing out into the stream a broken fringe of dwelling houses and landing stages.

In order to understand the vast calamity of the Great Fire, there are two things always to be borne in mind in reading these pages. The fact of momentous significance is that there was no fire insurance—nothing confronted the citizens but irreparable loss of all that the flames consumed. And the extent of that loss is not to be

measured by the mere area of the City embedded in the map of London as we know it. To the merchant of Charles II's age the City and its Liberties were London.

The enormous growth and imponderable, formless mass of the town that results are phenomena of a later time. A few taverns clustered about Holborn, and beyond the bars stood the George and Blue Boar—the name is still preserved—familiar in history for an intercepted letter from Charles I to Henrietta Maria, there torn from a courier's saddle; but it was a short line towards St. Giles, then literally "in the fields." The town assembled more closely along the Strand to Westminster, and spread out two northern growths towards Spitalfields and Clerkenwell. These built-in areas apart, there was little else beyond open land with a few houses and the view of distant villages—Islington, Highgate, and Hampstead on the heights, and Hackney lying away north-east. "The country mighty pleasant," says Pepys, discoursing of his coach ride with his wife to Whitechapel, Bethnal Green, Kingsland, and home by Newington Green. From Holborn grass fields were still to be seen a century after the Fire.

The destruction of London was not unexpected. King Charles himself had frankly expressed his fears, and a year before the Great Fire (the 11th April, 1665) had written to the Lord Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen, warning them of the peril of fire from the narrowness of the streets and alleys, and the overhanging houses built of wood. They had his Royal authority to imprison those persons

who continued to erect houses in contravention of the Building Acts, and to pull down their dwellings.

The age abounded with seers, who had horrific visions of London's doom. Through the pamphleteering literature of the Commonwealth and the early years of the Restoration there runs a vein of gloomy prognostication of impending catastrophe, to be brought about by God's vengeance upon sinful London.

The idea lay like a nightmare over the religious feeling of the time. Conventicle and Quakers' meeting-house alike had resounded with the utterances of enthusiasts, who railed in no measured terms against the monster city—the city Babylon, the bloody city, as they loved to term her—proclaiming with the fervour of fanaticism that the measure of her iniquities was full, and the day of extinction was at hand. Walter Gostelo, in a treatise printed in 1658, gave prophetic warning—

London, go on still in thy presumptuous wickedness! put the evil day far from thee, and repent not! do so London. But if fire make not ashes of the city, and thy bones also, conclude me a liar for ever. Oh, London! London! sinful as Sodom and Gomorrah! the decree is gone out, Repent, or burn, as Sodom, as Gomorrah!

From the printed tracts I give a few passages which are not only typical, but forecast with remarkable accuracy what actually happened. Daniel Baker, after much invective against London, foresaw—

. . . a fire, a consuming fire, shall be kindled in the bowels of the earth, which will scorch with burning heat

all hypocrites, unstable, double-minded workers of iniquity. . . . A great and large slaughter shall be throughout the land of darkness where the unrighteous decrees and laws have been founded. Yea, a great effusion of blood, fire and smoke shall encrease up in the dark habitations of cruelty, howling and great wailing shall be on every hand in all her streets.

The Quakers were famous seers. From them all I quote only Humphrey Smith, who died in Winchester Gaol in 1662, after having endured long persecutions for the sake of his creed. His *Vision which he saw concerning London* was printed in 1660. The following passage is startling—

And as for the city, herself and her suburbs, and all that belonged to her, a fire was kindled therein; but she knew not how, even in all her goodly places, and the kindling of it was in the foundation of all her buildings, and there was none could quench it. And the burning thereof was exceeding great, and it burned inward in a hidden manner which cannot be described. All the tall buildings fell, and it consumed all the lofty things therein, and the fire searched out all the hidden places, and burned most of the secret places. And as I passed through her streets I beheld her state to be very miserable. . . . And the fire continued, for, though all the lofty part was brought down, yet there was much old stuffe, and parts of broken-down desolate walls, which the fire continued burning against. And the vision thereof remained in me as a thing that was showed me of the Lord.

Solomon Eagle, of Defoe's Plague narrative, if not himself an historical character, was a type of others. A

Quaker had been moved to pass naked through the crowds at Bartholomew Fair, in Smithfield, bearing upon his head a pan full of fire and brimstone, and warning the pleasure-loving citizens of God's impending judgment, "for which some rude people did abuse him"; and a frenzied woman had gone to St. Paul's, a spectral figure with her face made black, and blood streaming down her dishevelled hair on to the sackcloth that constituted her only garment, some of which blood she poured upon the altar.[1]

Letters written by Roman Catholics before the Fire, of which so much was afterwards made, are worthless as evidence of a Catholic plot, but they show that adherents of the Church of Rome, though for widely divergent reasons, shared with Quakers and Nonconformists the anticipations of vengeance from Above falling upon the heretic city. After foreign enemies, French and Dutch, the popular suspicion first turned against the Nonconformists, but Protestant feeling soon found an object against which to unite the forces of calumny—the Papists. In the campaign against the followers of Rome all other religious differences were forgotten.

That something unusual would mark the year 1666 was a belief widely held, the astrologers having found cabalistic significance in the grouping of the three sixes in the numeral. "Most of our last year's almanacs talked of fire in London, and one named the month, but it was expunged by L'Estrange (who licensed them) for fear of

[1] *A Brief Relation of the Persecutions and Cruelties that have been acted upon the People called QUAKERS in and about the City of London, etc.* Lond. 1662.

consequences," says the writer of a letter describing the catastrophe.

Michael Nostradamus, more than a century earlier, is said to have foretold the very year of the burning, but the passage, revived after the Fire, is probably a forgery—

> Le sang du juste à Londres fera faute,
> Brûlez par foudres, de vingt-trois le six,
> La dame antique cherchera de place haute;
> De mesme secte plusieurs seront occis.

Mother Shipton's prophecy, that London in 'sixty-six should be burnt to ashes, was also recalled.

These were incursions into the occult, and not lightly dismissed in a superstitious age; but there was remembrance of an actual peril threatened. In April, less than five months before the Fire, John Rathbone, an old colonel of the Parliamentary Army, had been seized for conspiracy to kill the King and Monck, and restore the Republic. Engaged with him in the plot were William Sanders, Henry Tucker, Thomas Flint, Thomas Evans, John Myles, William Wescot, and John Cole, all officers or soldiers who had fought in the Civil War. The circumstances are detailed in the *London Gazette*, 30th April, 1666. They had designed to fire the City, first taking precaution to have the portcullises lowered at the gates, to prevent assistance being brought in. The Horse Guards were to be seized in their quarters and The Tower surprised, the plotters intending to scale the walls after they had crossed the moat in boats.

The eight conspirators were tried at the Old Bailey, convicted of high treason, and promptly executed.

September 3rd had been the date fixed for the attempt, that being found by Lilly's Almanac, and a horoscope constructed for the purpose, to be a lucky day, a planet then ruling which presaged the downfall of Monarchy. The day was also deemed fortunate by Republicans as the anniversary of Cromwell's victories at Dunbar and Worcester. The men's bodies were hacked and torn, but London recalled that, almost at the hour designated for the attempt, the burning of the City, the first part of their contemplated work, began.

CHAPTER II

OUTBREAK OF THE FIRE

"LITTLE pityful lane!" Waterhous calls Pudding Lane in his *Short Narrative*. It is a narrow way to the waterside near London Bridge, itself insignificant, but has meant much in London's history.

A line of tottering houses ran unevenly down the steep hill towards the Thames, every one of them timber-built, old and dry. The wood was coated with pitch; the storeys, projecting one beyond another, nearly met by the gable roofs, leaving only a thin thread of sky visible. Below went a dark, unwholesome, roughly cobbled street. The sun rarely entered this place; the dank city smell was persistent. At night the lane was lost in black shadows, till the Fire itself lit up the neighbourhood. An occasional candle, dimly glowing through horn, was judged sufficient illumination for more important streets than this. In 1662 died John Cook, a neighbouring parishioner of St. Michael Crooked Lane. He gave by his will twenty shillings yearly to maintain a lanthorn and candle lighted, affording light to travellers passing through Thames Street and St. Michael's Lane.

A contemporary writer upon the Fire describes Pudding Lane and the neighbouring streets as the narrowest of the City, so closely built about that in some a cart could

scarcely pass, and in others not at all. "The danger I did once run of my life thereabouts (says he) by the crowd of carts hath caused me many times to make reflection on the covetousness of the citizens and connivancy of magistrates, who hath suffered them from time to time to encroach upon the streets, and so to get the top of their houses so as from one side of the street to touch the other, which as it doth facilitate a confiagration, so doth it also hinder the remedy." [1]

There in the deep dark, with the Thames lapping the wharves a stone's throw distant, the Great Fire of London had its seat. The shop and house of one Farynor, the King's baker, stood in Pudding Lane, ten doors from Thames Street. By his oven, between one and two o'clock on the morning of Sunday, the 2nd September, 1666, the flames broke out. The fact does not admit of doubt. Not all the wild accusations against Papists and Frenchmen of wilfully burning the City, which fill some later pages of this book; not Hubert's confession, upon which he was hanged, nor the disclaimers of the baker himself, affect the judgment that must result from a calm consideration of the evidence, that the Fire in its origin was due to carelessness, and was not criminal. Farynor, his day's trading done, had gone to bed, "leaving his providence with his slippers," as the writer above quoted has said.

A pile of faggots for relighting the fire was by the side of the oven (according to one statement, within the oven) and some flitches of bacon hung near; but the baker took

[1] *Observations both Historical and Moral upon the Burning of London.* By Rege Sincera, 1667.

oath that he had drawn the oven at ten o'clock overnight; then, having occasion to light a candle about twelve, there was not fire enough in the bakehouse to kindle the match, so he had to go into another place for that purpose. Asked whether there was no window or door that might have let in wind to fan the embers, he affirmed that was impossible. It was fixed in his mind that his house was wilfully fired.

Farynor's man was awakened by a choking sensation shortly before two o'clock, and found the house full of smoke. He roused the family. The baker looked out, and afterwards he declared that the stack of bavins (brushwood for bakers' ovens) in his yard was not then alight, and the crackling of fire already heard was far remote from the oven and chimney. With his wife and daughter he escaped through a garret window, and by means of a roof-gutter reached a neighbouring house, so all three saved their lives. His man followed; but his maidservant, not adventuring as they had done, remained behind. Left beyond reach of help, she was the first victim of the Great Fire of London.[1]

The Fire at the outset progressed slowly. An eyewitness has left on record that he watched Farynor's house burning above an hour before any other was attacked.

[1] *A True and Faithfull Account, etc.*, 1667. Pepys's *Diary*, Feb. 24, 1667. Sir Edward Harley to Lady Harley, Oct. 20, 1666. (Portland MSS, *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, vol. 3, p. 301.) I found incidental reference to the ill-fate of Farynor's maidservant in the letter from Sir Edward Harley to his wife, above cited, but nowhere else; perhaps in the light of the momentous events that followed it was thought sufficiently small matter to be overlooked.

A neighbour next door was able to get out all his goods before his house was consumed. Opposite, on Fish Street Hill, stood the Star Inn, a travellers' resort that was rebuilt after the Great Fire of London, and survived more than a century later. Its yard and outbuildings were stored with hay and other combustibles. These became ignited by scattered sparks, and thereafter the galleried inn caught fire. To those few, immediate neighbours, who first hurried out to render help, the noisy creaking of the house signs and the wind whistling among the gable roofs must have been ominous sounds.

St. Margaret Fish Street Hill was first of the churches to be attacked. Then the flames, much augmented, crossed the street, and laying hold of the timber-built houses, dry as a chip after a hot summer's long drought, burnt in parallel lines down Pudding Lane and Fish Street Hill towards the river quays. The night had the darkness that comes before dawn. London, tired with the exertions of Saturday, the busiest day of the week, had gone to bed, and the streets were deserted. Chamberlayne, a somewhat fanatical person, who wrote *The Present State of England* (1682), attributed the Fire and its spread unchecked to the drunkenness of the baker and his servants, and the sloth of the people, "filled with drink, and all in a dead sleep"; but of this, to London's credit, there is no rag of evidence.

A hundred fires had occurred before, burning themselves out after more or less damage had been occasioned. Sir Thomas Bludworth, the Lord Mayor, was roused at his house in Gracechurch Street, and arrived on the scene

as early as three o'clock, when few citizens were astir, and little pleased that he should himself have been disturbed. He attached no unusual importance to this particular fire. It would, in all probability, never have brought about the immense conflagration that followed but for a single fact, namely, that the flames were carried down to Thames Street. There, in a more practical sense than at Pudding Lane, the Great Fire of London originated. Thames Street and the adjacent lanes immediately about the Bridge were almost monopolized by wharfingers. In cellars and sheds and warehouses were great stores of tallow, oil, spirits, hemp, and like combustible goods, brought by coasting vessels and traders from foreign ports, which came up the river to Billingsgate and Lyon Key, below the Bridge, and Queenhithe above. On the open wharves, hay, timber, and coal lay heaped, ready to blaze up when ignited by the first burning brands. It was the quarter of London favourable above all others to the spread of fire.

Fish Street Hill, which to-day is a back way, noteworthy only because the Monument is built upon it, was the highway leading direct on to old London Bridge. Carts coming over the water jostled one another in the narrow cobbled street, making the steep ascent with difficulty—it was steeper than as we know it. St. Magnus the Martyr stood at the foot of the Bridge. The lines of fire, uniting, crashed through the church. Little time availed to save anything. Happily the old registers were mostly got out, with loss of the vestry orders. The parish clerk, in haste to escape, left behind the monies received for burials since the previous Lady Day. The plate was

consumed. A fierce fire burnt within the church, leaving little but shattered walls ready to fall, and the flames, bursting through the belfry stages, leapt the height of the tower, which was a conspicuous object to those crossing the bridge. They gave the first signal to London that a fire of unusual magnitude had to be met.

St. Magnus parsonage house, in the adjoining Churchyard Alley, was quickly "wasted."

London Bridge lay in the direct path of the Fire, now seething and crackling about its approaches. Old London Bridge had been completed when King John sat on the English throne, and even more than the Conqueror's White Tower gave an aspect of antiquity to the city about to be destroyed, which was so much older than Charles II and his age. Its long line, low upon the water, was supported by nineteen stone arches and piers. The "starlings" built up from the river bed made a bad obstruction to the tide, surging down to the sea in actual rapids between them. Narrow as was the way left for horse- and foot-passengers on the Bridge, where for the greater length only twelve feet divided opposite houses, there did not remain sufficient space for the shops and buildings crowded together on both sides. Most of these consequently projected above the river, the backs upheld by timber struts. Over this Bridge, picturesque in its mediævalism, King Charles had passed, riding between his brothers, the Dukes of York and Gloucester, on his triumphant return to his capital on the afternoon of the 29th May, 1660, with banners waving, people cheering, and blare of trumpets; three hundred citizens assembled there in cloth of silver doublets and thirteen hundred

more in velvet; heralds and maids in splendid habits; the monarch preceded by Sir Thomas Allen, the Lord Mayor, the City Mace and Marshal and Sheriffs and Aldermen giving him attendance.

A number of houses newly built stood at the northern end, the space having lain waste for fifteen years after a disastrous fire on the Bridge in 1632. The carelessness of a servant of one Briggs, a needle-maker living there, in leaving at night a tub of hot ashes under the stairs had been responsible for this earlier fire, which consumed forty-two houses, and burnt for eight hours. St. Magnus Church, though in the gravest peril, escaped on that occasion, and in gratitude therefor a devout parishioner, Susanna Chambers, left to the parson a yearly sum of twenty shillings for a sermon to be preached in commemoration of God's providence. The progress of the fire upon the Bridge was only stayed when the flames reached the first clear space above the water.

The flames of 1666 followed the same course, burning through the gate-tower and laying low the new houses, rebuilt three storeys high and again timber-framed and timber-strutted. Overhanging portions fell into the flood below, and floated away, the rest collapsing upon their foundations. The road was thus blocked, the way being made impassable to any who might have combated the flames. Fortunately the open space which served so well in 1632 served again thirty-four years later, and there the Fire stopped. Sparks blown from the debris set alight a stable in Horse Shoe Alley, Southwark. After two houses had been involved, the Fire across the river was stayed by the pulling down of a third. No life was lost

on the Bridge ; but, if Walpole (*Anecdotes of Painting*) is right, the world lost a Holbein picture. He says—

"The father of Lord Treasurer Oxford, passing over London Bridge, was caught in a shower, and stepping into a goldsmith's shop for shelter found there a picture by Hans Holbein (who had lived in that house) and his family. He offered the goldsmith £100 for it, who consented to let him have it, but desired first to show it to some persons. Immediately after happened the Fire of London, and the picture was destroyed." The anecdote is interesting, but Holbein cannot have lived in this identical house, for all those burnt on the Bridge in 1666 had been rebuilt long after the painter's death.

About one-third the length of the Bridge was cleared of the buildings encumbering it, but the damage went down. Arches and piers that had stood firm with centuries' use were left insecure when the stones had cooled. The Bridge House spent £1,500 in necessary repairs before the leaseholders could attempt to rebuild. The keyed wooden structure known as Nonsuch House, which was the wonder of the Bridge, the drawbridge, and the remaining houses towards Southwark were not touched by the Fire, and survived for Hogarth and other delineators of a later day to hand down to posterity. High above the Southwark gate-tower the impaled heads of traitors were raised beyond reach of the flames, though scorched, it may be, by live sparks drifting in the wind. The company had received new additions since King Charles's Restoration. With rope and axe regicides had suffered death and dismemberment, and the heads of some had been chosen for display here. Dryden, in

his picture of the Fire in the *Annus Mirabilis*, recalls these grisly onlookers of the scene—

> The ghosts of traitors from the Bridge descend,
> With bold fanatic spectres to rejoice;
> About the fire into a dance they bend
> And sing their sabbath notes with feeble voice.

Venner, the leader of the mad Fifth Monarchy movement, had given the last head to be impaled over the Thames.

London Bridge was flaming at eight o'clock, by which hour Pepys had risen, having slept unconcernedly after his first disturbance. Looking out at the window he saw the Fire, "not so much as it was"—the flames made less display in the daylight—and farther off: "By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down to-night by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all Fish Street, by London Bridge. So I made myself ready presently, and walked to the Tower; and there got up upon one of the high places, Sir J. Robinson's little son going up with me; and there I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge; which, among other people, did trouble me for poor little Michell and our Sarah on the bridge. So down, with my heart full of trouble, to the Lieutenant of the Tower, who tells me that it began this morning in the King's baker's house in Pudding Lane, and that it hath burned down St. Magnus Church and most part of Fish Street already. So I down to the waterside, and there got a boat, and

through bridge, and there saw a lamentable fire. Poor Michell's house, as far as the Old Swan, already burnt that way, and the fire running farther."

Lord Fanhope had a Thames-side mansion by London Bridge at a time when many noblemen chose the banks of the river as the most desirable dwelling-place in all the capital. It had become Fishmongers Hall by purchase when, at the close of the fifteenth century, the saltfishmongers and the stockfishmongers united, and agreed that this should be their sole meeting-place. Large additions obscured the original residence, which formed barely one-fourth of the buildings standing in 1666, west of the bridge near its abutment. A north-east wind blew the flames directly towards them. Fishmongers Hall was the first of forty-four Companies' Halls to be destroyed in the Great Fire of London A tinder box lay between it and the bridge; nests of dilapidated timber houses, sinking into the last stages of decay, and crowded upon the slip of ground below Thames Street (here the old Stockfishmonger Row) overran the ancient fish-market quay to the water's edge, and were intersected by foot-passages that served as funnels to enlarge the Fire—Watergate, Churchyard Alley, Red Cross Alley, now swept away. These were quickly reduced to mere foundations.

The flames set alight the high roof and lantern of the Hall proper, built at the back of an open quadrangle and burnt down to the ground. A sorry spectacle it made amid the ruins. The stone frontage by the river fared better. Hollar's drawing after the Fire shows the shell still standing, with a lofty tower and stairway at the

western end, and a high arched gateway that gave access to the small riverside terrace.[1] The wings perished with the Hall. Apparently few, if any, of the Company's movable possessions were saved; at least, nothing survives to-day, neither records nor plate, that can with certainty be dated anterior to the Fire. They have what is said to be the identical dagger with which Lord Mayor Walworth, himself a fishmonger, slew Wat Tyler—an ugly weapon, with a twisted steel guard. As John Stow said when assailed by doubts, that I pass by. Among the existing plate is a frosted cup on baluster stem, fifteen inches high, the bowl of which bears the inscription—

The Guift of John Owen, Esq., Prime Warden of this Company anno dni 1668, 1669, and 1670. In which yeares this hall was new built, after ye dreadfull fire in 1666.

Close against the Bridge was the Thames water-house, well known to visitors to London in Charles the Second's reign and long after. Peter Moris, a Dutchman, had conceived the idea in 1582 of utilizing the rush of the river through the narrow arches for raising a supply to houses near the bridge foot and in Thames Street, and his wheel and engine forced the Thames water in leaden pipes over the steeple of St. Magnus Church. First one arch only, that nearest the Middlesex bank, was employed.

[1] Fishmongers Hall is best shown, though on a minute scale, in Hollar's drawing of London in 1647, and earlier in that of Hogenberg. The hall was rebuilt by Jerman after the Great Fire, and was demolished in 1830 to make room for the new London Bridge, west of which the present hall stands.

Later five wheels creaked and groaned in the stream, with unceasing noise; their final demolition took place so late as 1822. The water was forced as far as Gracechurch Street, and ultimately to higher ground at Leadenhall, whence it was distributed. The flames of 1666 as they crossed the Bridge put the entire apparatus out of action. That was London's misfortune at the outset of the Fire.

While St. Magnus, low-lying near the river level and partly sheltered by the Bridge, was steadily burning, another church was being consumed in flame. St. Margaret Fish Street Hill, ignited from the neighbouring houses, was completely destroyed. The church was not rebuilt, and to-day the open Monument Yard occupies its site. St. Botolph Billingsgate stood in Thames Street a few paces distant from St. Magnus, and suffered a like fate when the Fire beat back against the wind. But the trend was westward; the Fire ran along the riverside hours before it made substantial progress in other directions, and only with comparative slowness burnt back from the water. The sun was southing when first the Fire assumed the form of that "bow" of flame, ever widening and enlarging, that so impressed the imagination of Pepys and other eye-witnesses.

The destruction of houses to clear a way in advance of the flames was suggested to Bludworth soon after dawn, but the cautious Lord Mayor hesitated; the cost was great. "Who shall pay the charge of rebuilding the houses?" he asked those who so advised him, little appreciating the larger charge that London must needs pay. To others who again pressed him to take this neces-

sary course he answered, that he dare not do so without the consent of the owners. Thereby he brought down upon himself universal blame. Wise as were so many people after the event, they displayed little wisdom or prescience in the actual time of crisis, none being able to realize that a fire started in a dirty, disreputable side alley could attain the enormous dimensions reached in its four days' onslaught. The first impelling thought of each man was to save his own goods; his last thought to collaborate in steps to save those of his neighbour. The pulling down of houses was seriously begun before noon. It was begun too near the Fire. The flames were quickly upon the workers, driving them away even before a clearance could be completed. Then, crossing the debris, flames attacked the standing houses opposite.

London awoke that Sunday morning not greatly perturbed, rising earlier, it is true, than is now the custom. We are told that the day was bright and sunny, with a cloudless sky. The night—contemporary writers have pictured its alarms. "The fire begins," says Vincent breathlessly, "is quickly taken notice of, though in the midst of the night. 'Fire! fire! fire!' doth resound the streets; many citizens start out of their sleep, look out of their windows; some dress themselves, and run to the place. The Lord Mayor of the City comes with his officers; a confusion theres is; counsel is taken away; and London, so famous for wisdom and dexterity, can now find neither brains nor hands to prevent its ruin."[1]

Samuel Wiseman, writer of a poetic broadside, is in the same strain—

[1] *God's Terrible Voice in the City*, 1667.

> And now the doleful, dreadfull, hideous note
> Of Fire, is scream'd out with a deep strain'd throat;
> Horror, and fear, and sad distracted cries
> Chide Sloth away, and bid the Sluggard rise;
> Most direfull acclamations are let flye
> From every Tongue, tears stand in every Eye.

I find nothing of this in the private letters and diaries, which are more valuable as historical sources. It is pure fancy. The fact is that the spectacle of fire was too common in London for people living remote from its seat to display much concern. It was the custom from the nearest church belfry to ring a peal backwards to give alarm of fire in a City parish. Pepys, in Seething Lane, though only a quarter mile distant, slept on undisturbed. That stir and confusion prevailed in the immediate neighbourhood of the flames is no doubt true. It is equally true, and more worthy of note, that the larger area of London had no sense of its peril until the forenoon was far advanced. The churches filled with their usual congregations. The Court at Whitehall knew little of the Fire's extent till Pepys, hot-footed, arrived about eleven o'clock, "where people came about me, and I did give them an account dismayed them all." He was admitted to immediate audience of the King, and returned to the City with the first instructions to the Lord Mayor, to spare no houses, but pull down before the fire every way.

Live flakes scattered by a high wind, and the first dense volumes of smoke rolling up from the Bridge, conveyed the message of London burning. The citizens, at first merely curious, became alarmed. They flocked into the streets and on the house-roofs to see the Fire, while yet

there was so little to be seen, and idle rumour enlarged the tale. The public mind was uneasy, and filled with forebodings of the war then being waged, with varying fortunes, against France and Holland. Monck, at sea, when Prince Rupert's squadron was detached to prevent a junction of the French and Dutch fleets, had attacked a greatly superior force of Dutch sail and suffered a severe reverse; but the defeat was brilliantly retrieved by a victory gained over De Ruyter on July 25th and 26th, followed by an incident of a sinister kind. A thousand sailors landed on August 8th and 9th from the English ships on the islands of Vlie and Schelling had given over the town of Brandaris to the flames, and with fire-ships sent adrift destroyed one hundred and sixty Dutch merchantmen in harbour, whose cargoes were valued at a million sterling.

The delayed news had been in London a fortnight. Monck was again at sea, and people anxiously awaited the next move in the war, fearing reprisals.

No intelligence reached our shores; only this message of London burning. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," was the Mosaic law. The war had been brought home. Quickly panic spread. London, one man told another, had been wilfully fired! A revengeful enemy stood out in every Dutchman or Frenchman, as curious as any to know what was astir, an object of suspicion was found in each reputed Papist. There is an interesting letter by a resident of Middle Temple,[1] who says that he knew nothing of the Fire till nine o'clock.

[1] Three original letters from this resident of Middle Temple are in the Gough MSS. collection at the Bodleian. They are printed

Then, running down to the Temple Gardens, he saw the smoke of the fires in London and Southwark, and the flames about the Bridge. Not satisfied at that distance, he went with others into the highway. Fleet Street was full of people, all fearful of what was happening; "for it was already imagined the design of the French and Dutch in revenge of what our forces had lately done at Brandaris upon the island Schelling. The riding of a hot-headed fellow through the street (with more speed and fear than wit) crying 'Arm, arm!' had frightened most of the people out of the churches."

Dr. Taswell, afterwards Rector of Newington and of St. Mary Bermondsey, was at the time a boy in Westminster School. In reminiscent vein he records—

"On Sunday between ten and eleven forenoon, as I was standing upon the steps which lead up to the pulpit in Westminster Abbey, I perceived some people below me running to and fro in a seeming disquietude and consternation; immediately almost a report reached my ears that London was in a conflagration; without any ceremony I took my leave of the preacher, and having ascended Parliament steps, near the Thames, I soon perceived four boats crowded with objects of distress. These had escaped from the fire scarce under any other covering except that of a blanket.

"The wind blowing strong eastward, the flames at last reached Westminster (*sic*); I myself saw great flakes carried up into the air at least three furlongs; these at last pitching upon and uniting themselves to various dry

by Malcolm in *Londinium Redivivum*, iv, 73–82, for which purpose they were lent by Gough.

substances, set on fire houses very remote from each other in point of situation. The ignorant and deluded mob, who upon occasion were hurried away with a kind of frenzy, vented forth their rage against the Roman Catholics and Frenchmen; imagining these incendiaries (as they thought) had thrown red-hot balls into the houses.

"A blacksmith in my presence, meeting an innocent Frenchman walking along the street, felled him instantly to the ground with an iron bar. I could not help seeing the innocent blood of this exotic flow in a plentiful stream down to his ankles. In another place I saw the incensed populace divesting a French painter of all the goods he had in his shop; and, after having helped him off with many other things, levelling his house to the ground under this pretence, namely, that they thought himself was desirous of setting his own house on fire, that the conflagration might become more general."

CHAPTER III

THE RIVERSIDE FIRE

THE storm which kept apart the English and Dutch Fleets prepared for the anxiously expected engagement in the Channel, and drove some of our sloops of war in a crippled condition into port, served London badly. A fresh breeze had blown for a week. It increased in violence on Sunday, and continued with little change during the worst days of the Fire, shifting at times a point or two, but never more, and always driving the flames farther into the City. Landsmen, mystified in such matters, spoke of the wind as coming from all quarters; a sailor's knowledge here is valuable. Captain Joseph Ames, whose ship was weatherbound at Blackwall Reach, unable to get down the river, says that on the first day of the Fire the wind blew hard at east-north-east, and on the Thursday was still north-east.

The City lay defenceless before the oncoming flames. Although warned by repeated fires, sometimes of considerable magnitude, the Lord Mayor and Aldermen had taken no effective steps to deal with the peril. Leathern buckets, ladders, axes, and strong iron fire-hooks were kept in each City church, usually under the tower, and at some of the Livery Companies' Halls. Many references to their use and upkeep are found in the London churchwardens'

accounts of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; but the provision came to be neglected. The augmentation of Peter Moris's original wheels at the Bridge, largely increasing the quantity of Thames water raised, and more especially the introduction of New River water to London, had fostered a false sense of security, or at least condoned a deal of carelessness. Cocks were set up in the New River service pipes where they entered each separate ward, to be used in case of fire in place of cutting the wooden pipes, which hitherto had been the practice on such occasions, but there was no system of street fire-plugs. There had been invented by Hautsh, of Nuremberg, in 1651, an engine for throwing repeated jets of water, but such an appliance was wholly unknown in England at the time of the Great Fire of London.

In the Bodleian Library is a rare book of the reign of James I, which contains a print showing the whole fire service of that day at work. A fire broke out at Tiverton, Devon, in 1612, which destroyed the greater part of the ancient city, and this picture represents Tiverton burning. The fire-hooks, there seen in use, were fixed to poles, often 20 ft. or 30 ft. in length. The hook was thrown over the ridge-beam of a burning building, there being iron rings at the end of the pole and part way up, to which cords were attached, and were dragged by companies of men or horses till the fragile timber-built house came clattering down. This course often prevented the flames spreading to adjoining premises. Old fire-hooks are preserved at the churches of Raunds, Stanwick, and Harringworth, all in Northants; at the parish church of Tonbridge, Kent; at Ivinghoe, Bucks; Linton, Cambridge-

shire; St. Benet's, Cambridge (mutilated); and the police station at Welwyn, Herts. In some old houses in the Midlands will still be found iron rings under the roofs, placed there for "engaging" the fire-hooks. The "engines," so called, that were also in use in London at the Restoration are difficult to define. The name appears to have been given to the brass hand-squirts[1]; but there was also employed a portable cistern—commonly a large cask—mounted on wheels. Exeter Museum still preserves that city's "fire engine" of this type, dated 1626, with its leather buckets for service.

Three of London's ancient fire squirts are preserved at the Guildhall Museum. One had belonged to the Ward of Aldgate in 1672, the second to the parish of St. Dionis Backchurch, and the third was used at Guildhall in 1687. Each is a hollow cylinder, the barrel being two feet in length, and provided with two side-handles. The nozzle aperture is half an inch. The squirt was filled by inverting the nozzle in water, then reversed and (when in rapid use) held by two men, while a third operated a piston working within. The effective delivery was less than a gallon. With such rudimentary appliances, and nothing better, the greatest fire ever experienced in this country was confronted.

The Thames-side above London Bridge, where the Fire was now seated, was a rookery of stores and cellars

[1] Two months after the destruction of the city, Nov. 8, 1666, Sir John Robinson, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, obtained authority to provide 400 "engines," 300 buckets, 10 ladders, and 12 hooks, for the suppression of fire in the Tower should it occur. (*State Papers, Domestic.*)

and low, dark dwellings, timber-built and rotting with age and neglect, with an occasional old merchant's house, fallen into decay and let out in tenements. A large part of the population which gained a living upon the river crowded into these hovels—wherrymen, stevedores, porters, carriers, and others. A church stood here, a Livery Company's Hall there; and by these larger buildings a city is known, but a hundredfold more numerous are the smaller, unconsidered houses. They have neither history nor remembrance. But their existence must always be kept in mind if one shall understand the terrible calamity of the Great Fire, which ultimately destroyed 13,200 houses, and left some 100,000 people homeless.

Little of that picturesque Old London which so fills the imagination was to be found by the waterside. There was but one continuous street, itself narrow and low-lying (Thames Street was raised three feet when London was rebuilt). Along it the whole of the merchandise brought by river had to pass. The way was commonly choked by carts, and the wheels rumbling on the cobble-stones and cries of the carters urging their straining horses up the steep brow of the hill into the City made the place pandemonium. On the level extending out to the river's edge, where devious alleys guided the pedestrian's footsteps to the Thames, every available inch of surface was covered by the squalid buildings, mostly weather-boarded and coated with pitch, and preserving no order or plan. The wall of the Roman city had run by Thames Street, where remains of it have recently been found near the bottom of Old Fish Street towards London Bridge, and it is probable that all this land between the street and the

river had been recovered from the foreshore in past centuries.

The waterside quarter was a sort of underworld of the City that rose beyond. The people, of less consequence than the goods they handled, secured a lodging begrudged to them only where space could not be more profitably utilized. To many of them, as the Fire pressed back, the broad river flowing by was the one safe refuge. Goods and furniture snatched from the flames were flung into boats, and often in desperation into the tideway itself, to float with the stream and take the chance of being salved. The Fire burnt through block after block of this choked property, with much crackling of dry wood and uprush of smoke. It is plain that the poor appliances available were not generally used at the onset of the Fire. "The engines had no liberty to play," says a chronicler, "for the narrowness of the place and the crowd of people, but some of them were tumbled down in the river, and among the rest that of Clerkenwell, esteemed one of the best." Homeless families congregated about the boat-stairs and wharves, frightened by the magnitude of the Fire, looking aimlessly at the destruction, till the advancing flames drove them away. Such authority for control as existed was vested in the Lord Mayor, who displayed neither the initiative nor strength of will that the occasion urgently demanded.

Pepys gives a most valuable account of the first day's progress of the Fire, till cares for his bags of gold, his wines, and his Parmazan cheese monopolized so large a part of his attention—and of his *Diary*. The picture he draws is of helpless confusion. "Everybody endeavour-

ing to remove their goods, and flinging into the river, or bringing them into lighters that lay off; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the waterside to another. . . . Having stayed, and in an hour's time seen the fire rage every way, and nobody, to my sight, endeavouring to quench it, but to remove their goods, and leave all to the fire; and, having seen it get as far as the Steelyard, and the wind mighty high and driving it into the City; and everything, after so long a drought, proving combustible, even the very stones of the churches . . . I to Whitehall, with a gentleman with me, who desired to go off from the Tower, to see the fire, in my boat."

He returned by coach, and alighting at St. Paul's walked along Watling Street, "as well as I could, every creature coming away loaden with goods to save, and here and there sick people carried away in beds. Extraordinary good goods in carts and on backs"—and thus to the waterside. "River full of lighters and boats taking goods, and good goods swimming in the water." The streets were "full of nothing but people and horses and carts laden with goods, ready to run over one another, and removing goods from one burned house to another." The inexplicable nature of the Fire, sweeping right and left, and the time of its occurrence, added to the flame and noise and commotion everywhere a vague dread of foreign attack manifested in this tremendous Fire, all the more fearful in men's minds because no enemy was visible.

The diarist makes many shrewd observations that

reveal the unexpected actions of people in the distress of panic. "Hardly one lighter (he notes) or boat in three that had the goods of a house in, but there was a pair of virginals in it." Why treasure the spinets when so much else was sacrificed? The City pigeons did not escape attention. Loath to leave the shelter of the houses, they hovered about windows and balconies till, with scorched wings, they fell down.

From his boat on the river Pepys had seen the flames pass the Old Swan (still marked by Old Swan Lane and the boat-pier), attack Dyers Hall, and in an incredibly short time reach out to Coldharbour and the Steelyard. The Thames-side over the space of a quarter mile was then alight. The old Hall of the Dyers Company stood near the water, where now is Dyers Hall Wharf, an ancient building already far advanced in decay, for the Company in 1658 had contemplated taking it down and rebuilding. Little was left when the Fire had spent itself, the hall with the armour contained in it and much of the plate being consumed, though some part of the plate was saved.

Near by the Steelyard was Watermen's Hall, fated, like the halls of the Fishmongers and Dyers, to complete destruction.

The Watermen, busiest of all people in saving the property of others, seem to have shown no practical concern in saving their own. The Fire was the wherrymen's harvest time. Their boats were at every man's disposal, at rates rising to ruinous sums as the Fire progressed. It is to be suspected that so actively engaged were they upon these unconscionable bargains that few boats were avail-

able when the home of their own gild was imperilled. No plate or pictures of the Watermen's Company survived the Great Fire of London. Of the accumulated mass of papers and records dealing with the affairs of the Thames, they have to-day only three books dating before the Fire—a register of binding of apprentices, October, 1655, to June, 1665; a book of by-laws and orders from 1626 to 1662; and a volume containing Privy Council Orders. The rest were black carbon. Of all the buildings there stood intact after the Fire nothing save the stone gateway giving access to the Thames. The Hall faced the river, and had belonged in 1600 to Earl Gilbert, who destroyed the western part of the ancient building. What remained was in use by the Watermen's Company in 1647, and probably many years before, though no date is known.

The flames, sweeping along the Thames-side, at least did good service by ridding London of Coldharbour's pestilential alleys. This, till its dissolution half a century before the Fire, had been one of the smaller sanctuaries where debtors and vagabonds herded together in a nest of foul tenements erected by the Earl of Shrewsbury when he pulled down the historic house known as Coldharbour. The sanctuary figures in many of the early plays. It was entered from Thames Street by a passage at the side of Allhallows-the-Less. That church was itself completely destroyed, and the site is marked to-day by its fragment of "God's acre." The larger Allhallows-the-More stood but a few paces distant; an important church, with three aisles and tower, and chapels of St. Catherine and St. Barbara and Lady Chapel. This had been one

of the first London churches to set up the King's arms on its walls in 1660, when Monck and Montagu, plotting the Restoration, were yet undecided.

It was so shattered by the intense heat that part of the roofless shell was afterwards blown down by wind; the end of the fabric had to be pulled down to avoid peril of life. The steeple stood firm, and from the molten bell-metal recovered from the rubbish that strewed the floor a new bell was cast, and was hung in the belfry in the year 1670.

Allhallows-the-More had a cloister towards the river, already "foully defaced and ruinated" in Stow's time, its walks surrounded by a graveyard. The possession of a cloister, so entirely unexpected in a London parish church, led Sir Walter Besant to suppose there may have been some sisterhood of nuns attached to the church, to offer prayers for the safety of travellers crossing by the ferry; and a later writer, Mr. J. Tavernor-Perry, has suggested as a more plausible theory that the cloister and the enclosing burial-ground belonged to the Hanse Merchants of the neighbouring Steelyard, and had been formed by them as their *campo santo* in a foreign land. It has been treated as unique, which it was not, for there were "cloysters" at various other City churches. What the term implies is not clear, but these structures seem rather to have been covered ways from the street to the church door than to have followed the well-known plan of the monastic cloister.

More significant of the fate threatening London was the appearance of fire on Laurence Pountney Hill. The circumstances were dramatic. Till then the Fire had

raged only along the Thames-side, with an arm thrust out upon the Bridge, and an ugly nucleus of flame about Fish Street Hill and the Bridge foot. St. Laurence Pountney Church, raised upon an eminence, overlooked the burning quarter by the river, as its slender tapering spire, one of the tallest in London, overlooked the whole City. Pepys saw the steeple "take fire in the very top, and there burned till it fell down." Live brands lodged by the wind had melted the lead casing and ignited the timber beneath. To another and more imaginative onlooker the fire atop of the steeple "discovered itself with so much terror, as if taking a view from that lofty place of what it intended suddenly to devour."

The apparition to a third spectator disclosed deep design. "I saw the fire," Thomas Middleton, a surgeon, told the Parliamentary Committee, "break out from the inside of Laurence Pountney steeple, when there was no fire near it. These, and such observations, begat in me a persuasion that the Fire was maintained by design." That belief was shared by many others during the dreadful days when London was burning. The fall of the steeple, with a new peal of bells placed therein not long before, completed the destruction. Late that afternoon the still blazing church, strongly fired, was visible over the whole City as far distant as the Temple Garden, a spectacle that increased the general alarm. It was not rebuilt, and the open site to-day forms a little oasis, where green bushes half conceal the tombs.

Four thousand Frenchmen and Papists were in arms, so the report ran, intending to carry with them death and destruction, and assist the conflagration. Taswell was in

the streets as the news flashed along, when "every person, both in the City and suburbs, having procured some sort of weapon or other, instantly almost collected themselves together to oppose this chimerical army." The panic died down, less quickly than it had arisen, and the harassed citizens again applied themselves diligently to saving their property, not to stamping out the flames, for always, unfortunately for burning London, the care of property was the first object.

Wind driven, the Fire enlarged its scope, creeping back from the river. By noon, it had entered the courts and alleys winding up the hill from Thames Street, some of which, bearing quaint names of mediæval origin, have survived all City improvements. There is Duck's Foot Lane, near the Bridge, an interesting example of transliteration. It was the Duke's foot lane, the narrow passage way to the rear of his Grace's mansion, which Suffolk Lane, close by, keeps in remembrance. Something akin occurred with a tavern much farther west, anciently showing the sign of the Bacchanals, which had adopted the title over the door and was known to later patrons as the Bag of Nails. Suffolk House, under the shadow of St. Laurence Pountney, was consumed above ground when the flames from Thames Street and the church joined, but there was preserved intact till our time an early crypt, groined with stone ribs, and supported in the largest of its three divisions by stone pillars. This historic house, one of many ancient City dwellings that perished in the Great Fire of 1666, belonged in the fourteenth century to that famous civic magnate, Sir John Pountney, four times Lord Mayor of London, but

had borne other names since that of Pountney's Inn, from successive noble owners. The Dukes of Exeter and Suffolk had lived there; then came Edward Stafford Duke of Buckingham, and afterwards Henry Courtney Earl of Devon and the Earls of Sussex. It was in Buckingham's brief day known as The Manor of the Rose, and is so referred to by Shakespeare in *King Henry VIII*, Act 1, Sc. ii., wherein the Duke's surveyor discloses Buckingham's traitorous conversation—

> *Surv.* Not long before your highness sped to France,
> The Duke being at the Rose, within the parish
> Saint Laurence Poultney, did of me demand
> What was the speech among the Londoners
> Concerning the French journey.

The Merchant Taylors Company had acquired the larger part of the property by purchase from the Earl of Sussex in 1561, and in the buildings established their famous Grammar School. It was completely burnt out. John Goad, the schoolmaster, at personal risk saved a portion of the library, and eighteen months later collected some of his scholars in a parish room by St. Andrew Undershaft, as the new school buildings rose slowly Hector Forde, the head usher, taught in the vestry-house of St. Katherine Cree, which escaped the Fire, undertaking to provide a partition to prevent his boys running about the church.

The City was all astir. Hasty summons had gone out to assemble the Trained Bands. They tramped to the Fire under command of their officers, and were posted at their several stations, "watching at every quarter," says Vincent, "for out-landish men, because of the general

fears and jealousies, and rumours that fire-balls were thrown into the houses by several of them, to help on and provoke the too furious flames." The King sent in his Guards; the Duke of York bade Pepys tell the Lord Mayor that he should have any more soldiers he might require; "and so," adds the diarist, "did my Lord Arlington[1] afterwards, as a great secret." A spectator found a party of forty horse of the Life Guards drawn up in Cornhill, and touring around the edge of the Fire met some companies of the King's regiments and of the Trained Bands marching into the City. In Cannon Street his further progress was stopped by the obstruction of goods and carts with which it was filled. "Here (he adds) we met my Lord Mayor on horseback, with a few attendants, looking like one frightened out of his wits." [2]

In Cannon Street, not yet reached by the Fire, Pepys first met the Lord Mayor when he returned from Whitehall with the King's orders. His account of that bewildered official is not more flattering—

"At last met my Lord Mayor in Canning Street, like a man spent, with a handkercher about his neck. To the King's message he cried, like a fainting woman, 'Lord! what can I do? I am spent: people will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses; but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it.' That he needed no more soldiers; and that for himself, he must go and refresh himself, having been up all night. So he left me, and I him, and walked home, seeing all people almost

[1] Henry Bennet Lord Arlington had been appointed Secretary of State in 1662.

[2] Malcolm, *Londinium Redivivum*, iv, 74.

distracted, and no manner of means used to quench the fire."

None of the populace who had seen the flames speeding along by the waterside had contemplated that the Fire would spread across the City. They bundled their goods into the nearest churches, when themselves should have been quietly at devotions there, having to remove them as quickly when the Fire approached. All the morning the lanes and alleys winding up from Thames Street had been choked with people carrying household belongings on their backs away from the flames into Cannon Street, believing that safety lay there. The street ran on the ridge of the hill. In the afternoon the goods were again moved out, when the peril came near, "into Lombard Street, and farther," says Pepys, "and, among others, I saw my little goldsmith Stokes receiving some friends' goods, whose house itself was burned the day after."

The King and the Duke of York came down the river from Whitehall in the afternoon, rowed in the Royal barge, and Pepys attended them to Queenhithe. Legend tells that his Majesty watched Watermen's Hall still burning from a tall house-roof in one of the alleys by the Three Cranes in Vintry, and was so stirred by the sight, and so eager in giving directions for more houses to be pulled down in advance of the flames, that his own life was in some jeopardy. "But little was or could be done," says Pepys, "the fire coming upon them so fast. Good hopes there was of stopping it at the Three Cranes above and at Botolph's Wharf below bridge, if care be used; but the wind carried it into the City, so as we know not by the waterside what it do there."

The Earl of Craven was one of a small band of noblemen who rendered London conspicuous service during the Fire. William Linsday Lord Craven, after long exile on the Continent, had followed Charles II to England at the Restoration. He had remained at his house in Drury Lane when the Court fled to Oxford on the outbreak of the Plague, and with Monck and Humphery Henchman, the Bishop of London, who also stayed, tended to the wants of the poor and the afflicted in the stricken city. His splendid activities and self-sacrificing work at great personal risk had won for him the affection of the citizens. It was, no doubt, at the burning of London that Lord Craven first acquired a passion for helping in the extinction of fires, which survived till near the end of his long life: there is a well-known anecdote that his horse knew the smell of a fire at a great distance, and was accustomed immediately to gallop off with him to the spot.

Lord Craven, when the King and the Duke of York returned to Whitehall, was left with a Royal command to assist the Lord Mayor and magistrates, and there official concern for the Fire seems to have ceased for the day. I searched the State Papers in vain for any indication of orders given on Sunday for organized action. They were plentiful enough on the following day. The catastrophe, so suddenly descending upon the capital, stupefied the authorities. Falling, too, upon a Sunday, it found the ordinary machinery of government dislocated. The Mayor and Aldermen, their authority stiffened by a few soldiers, were left to muddle through as best they might, with quite inadequate support. Confusion was every-

where; and at times a shiver passed through the ranks of bewildered men and women, running hither and thither in the City streets, as new rumours spread, causing needless alarm of attack by French or Dutch.

The fires on Fish Street Hill and St. Laurence Pountney, for the time separate, burnt towards one another, and before they joined involved two additional churches in the common ruin. Only one short bend of Crooked Lane has survived the changes made last century, when the approaches to the new London Bridge were laid out. In this lane stood one of London's most ancient houses, "The Leaden Porch," which had belonged to Sir John Merston when Edward VI ascended the Throne, and when the Great Fire destroyed it was a tavern with the sign of the Swan. St. Michael Crooked Lane, with its churchyard, in 1666 stood out where now is the centre of the road over which the heavy drays thunder on to the bridge. This was the third church that had occupied the site—a long building, flat roofed, with embattlements, and tower rising at the west end, also embattled. Walworth, that doughty Fishmonger, lay buried there with many of his brethren, for this was the Fishmongers' church. So little enduring is fame that, after his monument had been defaced in the reign of Edward VI, the Fishmongers Company, in recutting the epitaph, described him as the victor over Jack Straw! Caught by the flames at both ends, the church burnt furiously, nothing being left but the mere shell. The steeple above the tower fell upon the roof.

St. Martin Orgar, but a few paces west ("a small thing," says Stow), also perished, and the flames reached

out towards Cannon Street. Frequently it becomes impossible, by reason of conflicting statements or entire absence of evidence, to say at what stage of the Fire particular places were attacked, and Vincent's assertion that "on the Lord's Day night the Fire had crept into Cannon Street, and levell'd it with the ground," must not be read literally. When dawn broke over London the flames had entered only the eastern end of Cannon Street, though so early as four o'clock on Sunday afternoon the fire on Fish Street Hill had approached within five houses of Eastcheap. In Pudding Lane at that hour only three buildings north of the Fire's original seat in the baker's shop had been destroyed.

The Fire burnt all afternoon in the Steelyard by the waterside, and far into the night—a dreadful spectacle—fed by fresh fuel in the well-stocked warehouses and detached buildings scattered about its area. The keen Hanse merchants had played an important part in founding London's commercial greatness, and they occupied a large settlement where to-day, borne on high arches, the trains run into Cannon Street station. No name in the locality bears them remembrance, but they have left in England one curious vestige of their stay. The money of the "Easterlings" was so much sought after for its good quality that a "pound Easterling," or sterling, became the recognized standard of gold coinage, and is so to-day. In 1598, when the Hansa had been ordered by Queen Elizabeth to leave her kingdom, the Steelyard was seized by the Crown and given into the keeping of the Lord Mayor, pending a decision as to its disposal. The Royal Navy used a part for the storage of cordage. James I restored

the place to the Germans. There survived in 1666 the ancient guildhall of the Hanse Corporation, distinguished by its stone tower, a large structure, built with a stateliness befitting their dignity and wealth. Entrance was given by three arched gateways in Thames Street.

Though the decaying fortunes of the Hansa were shown in the decay of their buildings, they had by thrift been able to restore old houses since their eight years' dispossession. The Rhenish Winehouse in the Steelyard was a place much frequented by English merchants. Four houses had been new built in the year of the Fire.

Hoping till the last to save the property from destruction, the house-master got away with difficulty, being obliged to flee in his burning clothes. The Hamburg deputies happened then to be lodged at the Steelyard, and they also were hard pressed to escape. Did they, one wonders, leave behind to the flames two of the richest works of Hans Holbein's genius, painted for the merchants in their time of prosperity, "The Triumph of Riches," and "The Triumph of Poverty"? It is a possible explanation that, being fixed to the wall of the guildhall, these famous pictures perished with the Steelyard in the Great Fire of London. The tradition that they were conveyed to the Continent, and disappeared finally at places variously stated as Darmstadt, Paris, and in Flanders, has never satisfied.

That night a larger glare than London had known for centuries illuminated the streets. It was an accident, not provided for by City law, and still in the streets might have been noticed the tiny flare of the candles, each in its separate lantern, set out before the houses to light

the traveller's way. The Fire for the greater number was as yet distant; the citizens' duty remained—a duty emphasized by Act of Parliament four years before, which required all householders whose premises were on or near the street to show candles or light in lanterns "from such time as it shall grow dark, until nine of the clock in the evening, upon pain to forfeit the sum of one shilling for every default." Two personal impressions have been left of London burning as darkness began to fall; by the resident of Middle Temple before cited, and by Pepys, who carries the narrative further into the night.

"That evening," says the former, "I was a second time on the water, and it was then the fire appeared with all the horror and dreadfulness imaginable; the flames afforded light enough to discover themselves, the black smoke, and the buildings they so imminently threatened. The moon offered her light, too, but was overcome by this greater; which not being able (by day) to contend with that of the sun, had (as it were in spite) by smoke lessened it. I came back at eight o'clock, leaving it then at the Three Cranes, which is distant from the Bridge almost a fourth part of the space between the Temple and the Bridge. At night more of the Life-guard and soldiers watched in the city."

Pepys hovered about the Fire like a moth round a candle, overmastered by its awesome fascination, reluctant to leave. Though compelled to attend at Whitehall in the afternoon, he was soon back, and twice took boat again on the water—

"Walked [from Whitehall] to St. James's Park, and there met my wife, and Creed, and Wood and his wife,

and walked to my boat; and there upon the water again, and to the fire up and down, it still increasing, and the wind great. So near the fire as we could for smoke; and all over the Thames, with one's face in the wind, you were almost burned with a shower of fire-drops. This is very true; so as houses were burned by these drops and flakes of fire, three or four, nay, five or six houses, one from another. When we could endure no more upon the water, we to a little alehouse on the Bankside, over against the Three Cranes, and there stayed till it grew dark almost, and saw the fire grow; and, as it grew darker, appeared more and more, and in corners and upon steeples, and between churches and houses, as far as we could see up the hill of the City, in a most horrid, malicious, bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire. We stayed till, it being darkish, we saw the fire as one entire arch of fire from this to the other side of the bridge, and in a bow up the hill for an arch of above a mile long: it made me weep to see it. The churches, houses, and all on fire, and flaming at once, and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruin. So home with a sad heart, and there find everybody discoursing and lamenting the fire."

The flight of homeless refugees out into the fields had as yet hardly begun. The Fire, already larger by far than any in memory, noisier, more terrible, and so full of potentialities of evil, was still a riverside fire. The greater miseries were to come. Neighbours were able to afford the shelter of a roof to many of those less fortunately circumstanced than themselves; others stayed up

all night, tired but finding sleep impossible, watching the goods they had saved and stored in churches and public buildings, or heaped on the wharves at Bankside, where the great width of the river between them and the burning streets seemed to make safety assured. Pepys's household in Seething Lane was typical of many another Londoner's. He took in "poor Tom Hater," burnt out of Fish Street Hill. "We did put Mr. Hater, poor man! to bed a little; but he got very little rest, so much noise being in my house, taking down of goods." The wind kept the flames away from Seething Lane, and Pepys's house was never touched by the Fire; but the excitement of the City alarmed him unduly, "the news coming every moment of the growth of the Fire."

"I kept my bed but few hours, and slept less," writes another.

The spectacle of the Fire and want of true knowledge of its progress, the City's unrest, the fears of the populace, real enough and always enlarged by false reports, attracted people to the river, where they crowded upon wherries not otherwise and better engaged in the salving of goods, a task which went on unceasingly. All through the night the Thames was alive with boats, shooting out of the darkness into the glare cast by the burning City upon the water, wherein the yellow flames were reflected in every ripple crest, lost again when the tide or the rowers' strength carried the craft beyond into the neighbouring gloom. Barges were constantly crossing from the wharves to Southwark, heaped with merchandise and household effects, trailing black shadows over the water and standing out silhouetted against the sky's

artificial glow. London Bridge, itself a street of houses, stretched out a long arm from the central mass of the conflagration, its stone piers and arches radiantly white; and the smoke which rose was borne by the wind across the City and away. No living man or woman had known a fire like this.

Linked to the scene by awe, or admiration, or fear, defying sleep while watching the destruction, thousands of onlookers were still out as dawn broke after this first night when London was on fire.

Some time in the night the Boar's Head tavern in Eastcheap was consumed—first of many taverns made famous by Elizabethan wits which were lost to London in the Great Fire. Shakespeare and Burbage and Ben Jonson are said to have frequented it on their way over London Bridge to the theatres in Southwark and Bankside, and when returning after the play. Shakespeare has immortalized the house as the scene of the drunken debaucheries of Sir John Falstaff and his noisy dependants, Bardolph and Pistol, when Dame Quickly kept the reckoning, and of Doll Tearsheet's frailties. St. Magnus-the-Martyr preserves with its church plate a parcel-gilt goblet (it had belonged to the now amalgamated parish of St. Michael Crooked Lane) which an amiable legend declares to be the very cup with which Falstaff pledged Dame Quickly. That is as you will. The story seems to have arisen in the exuberant fancy of Washington Irving.

Nothing, in simple fact, survives to tell that the Boar's Head was a tavern so early as the days of Prince Hal. Possibly a tradition existed in Shakespeare's time.

The play pictures an Elizabethan tavern, otherwise Dame Quickly's bill made an unconscionable charge for sack, 5*s.* 8*d.* for two gallons. Likely enough that was a fair Elizabethan price; the liquor was sixpence a quart in Henry IV's reign. Moreover, sack was not then sold in taverns. The house, burnt out, was quickly rebuilt, with the carved stone sign now in the Guildhall Museum displayed over the door. A boar's head with silver tusks, believed to have fallen down with the house and taken from the ruins to Whitechapel Mount, was many years afterwards identified there—an interesting relic. The Boar's Head stood a few yards west of the spot where the statue of King William IV from the centre of the street looks towards London Bridge.

On its western edge the Fire burnt at dark up Dowgate, then an open street leading steeply down to the water dock, not shadowed by gloom as it is to-day. The flames there consumed three more Halls of the City Companies. All closely adjacent, and away from the riverside squalor, they made together a sheltered corner of that picturesque mediæval and Tudor London, little of which survived the Great Fire. Tallow Chandlers Hall ("a handsome house" of Howel's *Londinopolis*, and certainly in existence in 1518) was typical of a merchant prince's home, the front to Dowgate Hill being shops, and between them spread an archway giving entrance to a small open court. Its three sides were built in with the Hall, court-room, beadle's room, kitchen, and offices. The Fire destroyed all, leaving blackened ruins. The fine charter by Edward VI, the records and plate were taken by the Master in his coach to Hampstead. The

livery gowns, being left in a neighbouring church, were also saved. Innholders Hall has bare mention by Stow. The Company some months before had stored their plate at the Master's house (the Ram in Smithfield) and it thus escaped the Fire.

The loss to London of Skinners Hall was of more importance. The building had belonged to the Skinners Company before 1441, and incorporated the ancient Copped Hall, before which was a spacious yard; there was a parlour and ladies' parlour, a kitchen, a "pastrie," buttery and storehouse. Five shops facing Dowgate Hill stood upon the property. Nothing of these was left. The Court had assembled in Hall eleven days before the Fire, no doubt a cheerful company. The order made at their first meeting thereafter bespeaks the desolation wrought: "That the foundations of the Hall be dug over, and a search made for lead, iron, pewter, etc."

The Skinners removed their plate and muniments, first to a place of safety in Shoreditch, then into Essex when there appeared a danger of the Fire consuming all London. For this good service their successors are indebted to Mr. Foster, the renter warden, who at great personal sacrifice attended to the Company's business while his own property was burning.

The Post Office was kept at a house in Cloak Lane, Dowgate. Sir Philip Frowde was Governor for the lessee (Katharine Countess of Chesterfield, who farmed the posts under a monopoly which gave the profits to the Duke of York and his heirs). Frowde and his lady anxiously watched the progress of the flames bearing towards them, and at midnight, when the peril had be-

come grave, they fled for safety. The acting postmaster, James Hickes, was no stranger to horrors. At hazard of life he had remained in London throughout the previous year's Great Plague, keeping the letter office open and attending to its business, when neighbours were dying all around, and the red cross and that tragic appeal, "Lord, have mercy on us!" were chalked on many citizens' doors. He stayed himself this night of the Fire till one o'clock. Such was then the alarm of his wife and children that they would stay no longer, fearing lest their escape should be completely cut off. With difficulty, and no little danger in the burning streets, Hickes managed to reach an inn bearing the sign of the Golden Lion in Red Cross Street, outside Cripplegate, where he temporarily re-established the post-house. He saved such packets as he could hastily remove, and forwarded to Williamson, Lord Arlington's secretary, the letters of State received by the Chester and Irish mails, with a despairing note, that "how we shall dispose of our business only the wise God knows."

Left to its fate, the Post Office was burnt out during the night, many letters being consumed, and with them—a loss that was more keenly felt—a complete secret apparatus for tampering with, copying, and forging letters in the interests of the State, that had commended itself to the devious mind of Charles II.[1] This was the invention of the ingenious Sir Samuel Morland, who had been employed by Cromwell in espionage upon the mails, while secretly he was in communication with the exiled

[1] See W. G. Bell's *Unknown London*, wherein the story of this lost invention is fully set out.

King. The flames had been peculiarly cruel in their onslaught. The destruction of the waterworks at London Bridge had taken from the citizens the only practical means of combating the Fire at its inception; and at the close of the first day's progress the loss of the Post Office deprived them of the one channel by which authentic news could be spread. Hickes sent his family forward to Barnet, and himself followed. From there on Tuesday, the 4th September, he addressed a circular letter to the postmasters between London and Chester, and so to Holyhead, informing them of the catastrophe. "I am commanded to tell you (he wrote) that letters from Ministers of State are to be sent hither to me, that I may convey them to the Court. When the violence of the fire is over, some place will be fixed upon for the general correspondence."

The *London Gazette* published on Monday contained a dozen lines notifying the outbreak of the Fire. "It continues still with great violence," was stated. Thereafter the official sheet abruptly ceased publication. Letters to London were undelivered, and others ready for despatch were not sent out. For a whole week the postal service with the capital was completely disorganized. In the absence of news alarmist rumours spread throughout the country, and that the burning of London was due to incendiarism by foreign enemies was generally believed.

CHAPTER IV

FLAMES ACROSS THE CITY

FROM Whitehall the bend of the river half concealed the burning city, but the glow of the Fire at night, and flames shooting above the highest buildings, were visible at the Palace windows. The King and his Ministers had become thoroughly alarmed, fearing that nothing could save the capital. There is a sentence in a foreign resident's letter telling how the King was awakened during the night by the noise of the Londoners crying "Fire, fire! God and the King save us!"

As if in irony, the sun rose on Monday on a glorious day.

The Fire had already a front extending for half a mile. An area of many acres had been destroyed, but ruined houses upon it continued to burn furiously, and a large body of flame was speeding into the city north and west, travelling up Gracechurch Street and across Eastcheap and along Cannon Street, promising a conflagration that should reduce to insignificance all that had happened on the first day of the Fire. The destruction was much greater on the second day, greater still on the third, when Guildhall and St. Paul's were alight, and the Fire was in the Liberties.

The Court was no sooner astir than measures were

hastily taken to retrieve the dilatoriness of Sunday, but already invaluable time had been lost. Every hour enlarged the difficulty of encircling the Fire by a cleared zone, at the edge of which the raging flames should die down for want of further fuel. The Mayor was set aside (little more is heard of him). He had been obstructed in the vitally important task of pulling down buildings during the early spread of the Fire by certain wealthy merchants—"tenacious and avaricious men, Aldermen, etc., would not permit, because their houses must have been the first," says Evelyn. Moreover, the ancient City law, a relic of more tumultuous days, that any man destroying another's house should be at the charge of rebuilding it, made it necessary that decisions taken at a time of such grave emergency should have the authority of the King in Council. The Duke of York assumed supreme control in the City, under the King, who nominated members of the Privy Council, noblemen and others to the charge of stations. The Earl of Manchester, the Earl of Craven, Lord Ashley (afterwards the great Earl of Shaftesbury), Lord Belasyse [1] and Lord Harrison notably were active. More troops were sent in. The justices of the peace for Middlesex appointed Ely Place, Holborn, as their meeting place, and there informal councils sat to concert measures for subduing the Fire.

A first step was the summoning of fire posts. These

[1] Lord Belasyse, being a Catholic, years afterwards was denounced by Titus Oates for connivance in the Popish Plot, and his good services to London in the Fire did not save him the indignity of arrest and imprisonment in The Tower.

were spread out like a fan in advance of the flames. Westward they numbered five: at Temple Bar, Clifford's Inn Gardens, Fetter Lane, Shoe Lane, and Cow Lane, Smithfield. The parish constables were commanded to attend, each with one hundred men. Thirty foot-soldiers were attached to each post, under their officer. In addition, three gentlemen, justices of the peace, were nominated to the several posts, to direct the work of the military, constables, and civilians. Each post was provisioned with bread, cheese, and beer of the value of £5. Authority was given to reward with one shilling at the King's cost any man who was diligent at night.

Nearer the flames other posts were established at Cripplegate, in Coleman Street, and by Aldersgate. All these were maintained, not on Monday alone, but throughout the Fire. Orders were sent to the Lords-lieutenant of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent and Herts to draw in the militia round London. At night the tired soldiers and citizens were relieved from this source. The most beneficial work in saving what survived of the City, and finally stamping out the Fire, was done by seamen called up from the dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich and from the fleet, who blew up with powder many houses, and being handy with rope and chain, with a strong heave and all together brought down to the ground others of the lightly-built timber structures; but so little inspired were those upon whom the responsibility rested that their services were not requisitioned till the Fire was for a large part spent.

The Londoners now appreciated the grave peril that the Fire might consume their whole City. Pepys, abroad

before daybreak, found the streets filled with excited people. Like many another citizen near to the Fire, he had spent the hours snatched from sleep in getting his treasures into safety in the cellars of his house in Seething Lane, and his bags of gold and Exchequer tallies packed for removal.

"About four o'clock in the morning, my Lady Batten sent me a cart to carry away all my money and plate and best things to Sir W. Rider's, at Bednall (Bethnal) Green. Which I did, riding myself in my nightgown, in the cart; and, Lord! To see how the streets and the highways are crowded with people running and riding, and getting of carts at any rate to fetch away things. I find Sir W. Rider tired with being called up all night, and receiving things from several friends. His house full of goods, and much of Sir W. Batten's and Sir W. Pen's. I am eased at my heart to have my treasure so well secured. Then home, and with much ado to find a way, nor any sleep all this night to me nor my poor wife. But then and all this day she and I and all my people labouring to get away the rest of our things, and did get Mr. Tooker to get me a lighter to take them in, and we did carry them, myself some, over Tower Hill, which was by this time full of people's goods, bringing their goods hither; and down to the lighter, which lay at the next quay, above the Tower Dock. And here was my neighbour's wife, Mrs. ——, with her pretty child, and some few of her things, which I did willingly give way to be saved with mine; but there was no passing with anything through the postern, the crowd was so great."

By the Thames-side the Three Cranes in Vintry was no longer standing, having been consumed in the night. Pepys in January, 1662, had "a sorry poor dinner" there, in "a narrow dog-hole of a room," though it was the best the house afforded. This was one of the oldest waterside taverns in London, timber-built no doubt, and is mentioned in a London chronicle as early as 1425, when it was The Crane in Vintry. Near at hand Vinters Hall, a fifteenth-century building, met with a like fate, together with the Company's wharf and their thirteen almshouses built about the quadrangle. The latter after the Fire were removed to Mile-end Road, where they are still to be found. The Company saved their valuable plate, some pieces dating from 1518.

Three other Companies' Halls were destroyed overnight about the line of Thames Street, those of the Plumbers at Chequer Yard, north of the Steelyard, the Parish Clerks, and Joyners Hall near the water. In Parish Clerks Hall was kept the printing press on which were impressed the weekly bills of mortality, so valuable for their records of the Plague, and several important books in addition. It perished with the building in the Great Fire, a new press and letters being ordered in October, 1669. The Company had taken the hall in the Vintry in or about 1562, when they moved from Bishopsgate.

Across Thames Street the flames spread to the large church of St. Martin Vintry and that of St. James Garlickhithe (the registers of the latter, dating back to 1535, were fortunately saved), and crept up the brow of the hill, burning through Whittington's pious foundation.

Richard Whittington, Lord Mayor of London in 1396, 1397, 1406, and again in 1409—he was never Sir Richard, despite the popular belief—lay buried with Alice his wife in the church of St. Michael Paternoster Royal, which he rebuilt. Twice his sepulture had been disturbed, first by a ghoulish rector, one Thomas Mountain, thinking that some great riches were coffined with him, and again in Queen Mary's time by the parishioners, with the worthier object of replacing the leaden envelope, before torn from the body; "and so he resteth," adds John Stow. The marble tomb and all the church (in days of strife a popular place with devout Royalists) and Whittington's almshouses were destroyed by the Fire. College Hill, upon which St. Michael Paternoster Royal stands, takes that name from the college of priests founded by Whittington. The ecclesiastical college was suppressed, and the buildings swept away, at the spoliation of the religious houses, but the almshouses for thirteen poor men, fortunate in the protection of the Mercers Company, of which the generous donor was a member, had been allowed to survive. Left in complete ruin by the Great Fire, they were rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren on College Hill, with the church; in 1808 the almshouses were removed to Highgate.

The Cutlers Company lost their hall in Cloak Lane, Dowgate Hill, which had been in their possession since 1451, saving only their books and plate. A cup and cover, silver gilt, bequeathed by Mr. G. Clarke in 1616, a salt in the form of an elephant, presented in 1658, and a Bible with silver clasps, dated 1541, are in their possession to-day. Down by the waterside where the Fire

burnt the whole district was honeycombed with vaults and pits for the storage of brandies and wines. Its subterranean character is indicated in a name applied in mediæval times to the parish of Allhallows-the-Less—that of "Allhallows-on-the-Cellars"; and along the river bank, too, were carried on those objectionable trades, soap-boiling, dyeing, and the like, against which John Evelyn, in *Fumifugium*, launched his thunderbolts. Steam rising from many vats floated across Thames Street, in and about which sixteen breweries were situated, largely grouped in the Ward of Vintry. All these were consumed as the flames sped along. By ten o'clock on Monday morning the Fire had reached within four houses of Queenhithe.

Few people to-day know Queenhithe, which has gone out of London's life. Once this was one-half of the Port of London!

The harbours of Billingsgate and Queenhithe served all the wants of the mediæval capital, and there all shipping was brought up. Queenhithe in 1666 made a deep indentation of the river-bank, as it does to-day. Behind was a market place, where still an open space is preserved. Great hopes were entertained of staying the Fire's western advance there.

The King came down the river in his barge to Queenhithe, and by his presence encouraged a squad of men who were then strenuously employed in pulling down houses and in stripping the market, in order to leave nothing that could assist the flames; having stayed half an hour and received reports of the Fire's growth, the monarch returned to Whitehall. All efforts were in

vain. An eye-witness who watched says that "after two hours' expectation we saw all these endeavours slighted by a leap which the Fire made over twenty houses upon the turret of a house in Thames Street." There burning down to the ground, the flames were free to pursue their way unchecked towards Baynard's Castle.

The Fire, increasing in noise and violence, now extended in two arms, westerly along the river, and in a northerly direction up Gracechurch Street towards Lombard Street and Cornhill. A few hours' expansion since dawn had brought the flames into the City's wealthiest quarter, where they continued to burn all day amid the rich houses of merchants and bankers.

Gracechurch Street—once Gerschereche, Gratious Street, Grasschurch Street, the various spellings bespeak its antiquity—lingered then, and lingers still, as a survival of mediæval London. A market for herbs and fruit, with stalls out on the roadway, was held at its outspreading lower end, which had been the City's original grass-market, but long before Charles II houses had encroached upon the open space. Time had gone by to attempt to check the Fire there. The old water conduit, standing out in the middle of the thoroughfare, was destroyed as the flames passed, and they broke upon St. Benet's Church, leaving only a ruin. The mass of flame was, however, towards Lombard Street, down which it was driven by the wind with great fury.

So the larger Fire spread into the City on Monday, September 3rd—a hot, dry September day, following a succession of many similar days, with glaring sunshine;

warm enough without this work. The loudest call was for carriers, and with it came a clamour for water. The last was not forthcoming in quantities adequate for the emergency. A long drought had reduced the flow from the springs, which only in small volume reached the conduits that were placed in the principal streets—in Cornhill, Aldermanbury, Cheapside, Fleet Street and elsewhere—and still gave a part of London's water supply. The wells, still numerous in the City, were also low. But, worse than all, there had been criminal carelessness. In the perplexity and confusion of Sunday no man's authority was respected. Roads had been torn up, and the long trunks of elm hollowed to form pipes, which carried the New River service, had been cut for filling the fire-buckets. The supply then ran to waste, and in sections of the City the pipes and cisterns were dry when water was most needed.

"Before the Fire (says Vincent) were pleasant and stately houses, behind ruinous and desolate heaps." Lombard Street, even though its buildings justified this description, was still the same narrow street, but a few feet separating the houses, that it had been when the Lombards settled there. The last Lombard merchants had quitted the country when Elizabeth reigned. They left us the familiar signs £ *s. d.* (*lire, soldi, denari*), and their trade as bill-brokers, bankers, and more especially insurers of the sailing fleets and cargoes upon the seas, remained about the street. Letters sent by King Henry VIII to the City for creating a bourse at Leadenhall had failed in their object. "Merchants must be content to stand and walk in the rain, more like pedlars than

merchants," wrote one of the number. They were brought under shelter when Sir Thomas Gresham built and gave to the City the first Royal Exchange in 1566, but Lombard Street maintained the characteristic place in London life it has held to this day.

This was, in 1666, one of the most picturesque streets in London. Elizabethan, even mediæval, to a great extent it remained, having nothing in character with the reign of Charles II, but it was mediævalism displaying its richness, tall houses of three and four stories, stoutly built and well kept, with large casement windows projecting out of the timber frames; a place of patches of strong sunlight and deep shadows, not, as in the quarter by the riverside, mediævalism displaying its poverty and squalor. Over the narrow causeway swung a wealth of gilt and coloured signs of strange beasts and quaint devices—the Unicorn, the Grasshopper, the White Horse, the Star, the Golden Fleece, the Fox, and fifty others.

Merchants crowded into Lombard Street in its busy hours, having their dwellings in the network of streets and alleys north and south, where ever since has been the financial centre of London. Lombard Street had financed the war which the country was waging. Its residents, when the Great Fire destroyed it, were the wealthiest of the City men. Sir Robert Vyner, elected Sheriff that memorable year, occupied a large house and ground covering a quarter-acre, standing next to St. Mary Woolnoth Church. He had providentially moved out all his bonds and papers nearly twenty-four hours before the Fire burnt the length of Lombard Street. He lost a fortune of £416,000 when Charles II, in 1672,

took the unconscionable course of closing the Exchequer, leaving him an unsatisfied creditor for that amount. Perhaps he is best remembered by an anecdote told of a City feast in his Mayoralty, whereat the King, stealing away to his coach in Guildhall Yard, was seized by the hand by his host, who cried with an oath, "Sire, you shall stay and take t'other bottle." Charles, ready in wit, replied with the line of an old song—

"He that is drunk is as great as a King,"

and the two jovial monarchs returned to the table to finish the carouse.

Edward Backwell, Alderman of Bishopsgate Ward, another victim—for £290,000—of the "Merry Monarch," had removed his sign of the Unicorn to a shop at the corner of Change Alley a month before the Fire.

Money could do much to purchase help, but not enough to stay the flames. By three o'clock on Monday afternoon the whole of Lombard Street was consumed. St. Edmund King and Martyr, and next to the church the George Inn, a house much resorted to by merchants (it was afterwards rebuilt) burnt at one end of Lombard Street, St. Mary Woolnoth Church at the other. Its wealth, being largely in bonds and other securities, was easily removed, and though merchants were hard hit by their losses, and widely scattered, the Fire brought no financial panic in its train. Evelyn, three weeks after the Fire, notes as a happy sign that not one failure was heard of.[1] Less philosophical was a Dutch broker, whose letter to friends in Amsterdam is preserved. "My house

[1] Letter to Sir S. Tuke, Sept. 29.

amongst others was burnt," he wrote; "by God's grace my books and letters of credit are at my house at Clapham, but none know where I shall find the merchants who will pay me the moneys due." Thomas Firmin, the philanthropist, whom his biographer describes as "a kind of almoner general of the metropolis," was amongst those burnt out of Lombard Street. He traded there as a girdler and mercer, and some years passed before he was able to rebuild on the site of his destroyed dwelling.

The Fire threatened Cornhill in the early afternoon, having burnt through the massed houses, with intolerable heat. Many alleys, narrow as they were in mediæval days, came out upon this busy street, and along these the wind drove the flames. The flying people scurried away, escaping with so much of their goods as they could remove in time to safety. In St. Michael's Alley Pasqua Rosee, fourteen years before the Great Fire, had set up the first coffee-house in London, establishing a social fashion which thereafter spread over the town. Cornhill in 1666 was a favourite shopping place, a mart of mercers and glovers and of trade in all its variety; even to-day it has not entirely lost that character. It is no new thing that the press of commerce has almost concealed from view the great church of St. Michael Archangel, shops packing up to the actual porch of the tower. The ground was so utilized in Edward the Sixth's reign. Stow worshipped in the old church standing here, and tells much about it; incidentally how one day the belfry was struck by lightning, and the ringers rendered prostrate. "An ugly shapen sight appeared to them, coming in at the south window; when the ringers came to themselves

they found certain stones of the north window to be raised and scratched, as if they had been so much butter, printed with a lion's claw; the same stones were fastened there again and so remain to this day. I have seen them oft, and have put a feather or small stick into the holes where the claws had entered three or four inches deep." The old antiquary, poking about with his feather and stick, is quite a delightful bit of self-revelation. To John Stow's father the damage done in the belfry was the work of the devil, whose form was seen in the flames.

In 1666 Cornhill was accounted a large and spacious street, though badly fulfilling such conditions as understood to-day. With the roar of the Fire at their backs, the noise ever coming nearer, soldiers and civilians were employed in pulling down the south side of the street, so as to leave a cleared open space—a dry moat beyond which the flames could not pass. It may well have been thought that the stone churches of St. Peter Cornhill and of St. Michael Archangel would be bulwarks to resist the Fire's progress if, by vigorous use of axe and hook and chain, the inflammable timber houses could be removed in time.

The Fire destroyed both churches, leaving upstanding St. Michael's high tower, though the flames raging within it consumed the four timber stages, and the bells fell clattering to the ground. The mediæval tower, built into Wren's new church, stood till 1721. A company of the King's Guards kept the throng of people back from the street. Monmouth was there on horseback among them. Years afterwards, when the Duke of Monmouth landed in rebellion at Lyme Regis, it was

one of the many accusations he made that James II had caused the burning of London. He was at this time in his eighteenth year, and but recently acknowledged by Charles II as his natural son, he had been raised to the peerage with precedence over all peers not of the Blood Royal. The favourite of fortune, young and handsome and debonair, envied by all men in the corrupt and licentious Court, he sits on horseback silhouetted for an instant against the vivid background of the Fire. Who then could have foretold the last pathetic scene on Tower Hill in which he was to figure?

Monmouth was the helpless onlooker of a tragic happening. The very precautions undertaken to stay the Fire assisted its farther advance. Vincent tells of the destruction of Cornhill in one of his breathless passages: "Quickly the flames cross the way by the train of wood that lay in the streets untaken away, which had been pull'd down from houses to prevent its spreading; and so they lick the whole street as they go: they mount up to the top of the highest houses; they descend down to the bottom of the lowest vaults and cellars; and march along on both sides of the way, with such a roaring noise, as never was heard in the city of London; no stately building so great as to resist their fury."

The Fire was now in the City's heart. St. Paul's, farther west, and Guildhall, to the north, were still distant, and not as yet menaced; but the flames on Cornhill found fresh fuel for destruction in a public building next in importance only to these. Sir Thomas Gresham's Royal Exchange had stood for a century, conspicuous in London's crowded area by its lofty square

tower of stone, carrying a clock and two balconied galleries. A weather-vane fashioned as a grasshopper (the donor's house-sign and crest) swung with the wind above the ball at the summit.

The City had spent £3,737 of Elizabeth's money in acquiring and clearing the site—good measure of the spaciousness of the Exchange. Its two hundred shops, so claimed, are perhaps an exaggeration in numbers, but contemporary prints make it plain that this was one of the most striking buildings in the capital. A gateway beside the tower gave access to the open 'Change, the vaulting of its cloister walks, where the merchants congregated, being held aloft by marble pillars. Above were statues of all the English Sovereigns since the Conquest.

There had been raised on the front of the Royal Exchange an effigy of King Charles I. The Commonwealth ordered that this should be mutilated, and so stand in this public place as an example to tyrants, the head being struck off, the sceptre broken in the hand, and this inscription written, "Exit tyrannus Regum ultimus anno primo restitutae libertatis Angliae 1648" [1]—the first year of English liberty. How the calendar mocks all those who have sought to begin it anew! Later the statue was toppled down, but the inscription remained. This in turn was cut out at the Restoration. The Mercers Company, as trustees of Gresham, erected a

[1] *State Papers* (*Domestic*), 1650, p. 261. A head of Charles I from a broken statue is in the Guildhall Museum, and very likely is the one dissevered by the Parliament's order. Cromwell's own "picture" was set up in the Exchange during the Commonwealth, with verses under it tending much to his honour. (*Thurlow State Papers*, iii, 66.)

new statue of Charles, which perished in the Great Fire.

Upper and lower pawnes, extending from the tower along Cornhill and Threadneedle Street, contained the shops and merchants' offices. In the manner of Elizabethan times these were built in stout timber frames. Gresham had brought the wood from his own estate at Battisford, in Suffolk. The Exchange pawnes formed the most fashionable shopping and loitering place in the City, stored with fanciful and artistic wares from every quarter. "Here, if anywhere," says the Rev. Samuel Rolle, "might a man have seen the glory of the world in a moment, as the Devil showed it to Christ upon a high mountain. Was it not the great storehouse, whence the nobility and gentry of England were furnished with most of those costly things wherewith they did adorn either their closets or themselves? What artificial thing could entertain the senses and fantasies of men that was not there to be had? Such was the delight that many gallants took in that magazine of all curious varieties that they could almost have dwelt there (going from shop to shop like bees from flower to flower). If they had but a fountain of money that could not have been drawn dry. I doubt not but a Mahomedan (who never expects other than sensible delights) would gladly have accepted of that place, and the treasures of it, for his heaven, and have thought there were none like it."[1] The Fire first seized upon the tradesmen's shops.

"The Royal Exchange itself," writes Vincent, "the glory of the merchants, is now invaded with much

[1] Rolle, *Burning of London*, 1667, pt. 3, p. 45.

violence; and when once the fire was entered, how quickly did it run down the galleries, filling them with flames; then came down stairs, compasseth the walks, giving forth flaming vollies, and filleth the court with sheets of fire; by-and-by down fall all the Kings upon their faces, and the greatest part of the stone building after them (the founder's statue only remaining) with such a noise as was dreadful and astonishing." The tower alone, a gaunt and seared skeleton, and one half of a single pillar, stood upright amid the ruin. The flames burnt down to the crypt underground, consuming a vast quantity of imported pepper and costly spices stored there by the East India Company. Crouch, in his *Londinenses Lacrymae*, recalls this incident in the Fire—

> Now the Imperious Element did range
> Without Controle, kept a full Ev'ning Change.
> Where the religious Spices for some Hours,
> Seem'd to burn Incense to the incensed Powers.

Sir Thomas Gresham's statue survived unbroken, though fallen from its niche, a fact which deeply impressed the people. The Royal Exchange built by Edward Jerman after the Great Fire of London stood till 1838, when it was completely destroyed in a second conflagration, and again the founder's statue was preserved unharmed. In earlier days a miracle would have been proclaimed.

Another fire was in Threadneedle Street, into which the Royal Exchange emptied its flames, and they quickly ignited the neighbouring church of St. Benet Fink; then crossing the way consumed the church and entire parish of St. Bartholomew Exchange, save only three houses

left standing in Copthall Alley. A tiny south chapel of St. Bartholomew Exchange, called the Capel Chapel, was but little harmed, and was used as a vestry till the destruction of the church built after the Fire in 1840. Little shops had stood on the churchyard. They were afterwards rebuilt, and the rector was accused of appropriating to himself the fine of £100 annual rental which hitherto had been for the use of the poor.

Whole streets of dwellings and shops fed the raging Fire, the timber houses burning in a bright flame which took an orange tint in the sunlight. When night fell the City, seen from a distance, with dark skies and dark masses of buildings closing in upon it, presented a spectacle of awful grandeur; but I doubt if even the Great Fire of London was impressive in these daylight hours. The flame has little notice. In letters and diaries it is the immense curtain of smoke, which at the height of the Fire covered London like a moving pall, that stimulated the imagination of writers as the most notable feature to be recalled. For four days unceasingly it rolled away, the contents of the stored warehouses continuing to burn day and night after the structures which contained them had been destroyed, giving out great volumes of dense smoke which rose above the City and were carried along by the wind.

"The yellow smoke of London (writes Vincent) ascendeth up to heaven, like the smoke of a great furnace; a smoke so great as darkened the sun at noon-day; if at any time the sun peeped forth, it looked red like blood." He tells of travellers out of London who rode at midday some miles together in the shadow, although no other

cloud was to be seen in the sky. Evelyn computes the trailing column of smoke to have extended fifty miles in length. Far distant apparitions were seen, if strong imaginations were not overwrought; away at Berwick-on-Tweed some soldiers witnessed "the likeness of an abundance of ships in the air." At Oxford a Mr. Locke kept an early meteorological register, and on the 4th September, 1666, it has this entry, "Dim reddish sunshine," with the further note—

This unusual colour of the Air, which without a Cloud appearing made the Sunbeams of a strange red dim Light, was very remarkable. We had then heard nothing of the Fire of *London*. But it appeared afterward to be the smoke of London then burning, which, driven this way by an Easterly wind, caused this odd Phenomenon.

Since early morning Cannon Street had been laid level with the ground, from Eastcheap to its termination at St. John upon Walbrook, where a church, newly built in 1412, stood beside the little stream that in mediæval days had flowed as an open watercourse from the fens at Moorfields, emptying into the Thames. Across the street the Fire burnt up into the City, through an area closely packed with houses, and intersected by mere passages—St. Clement's Lane, Nicholas Lane, Abchurch Lane, and others. So narrow were they that nothing effectual could be done, or attempted, to stay the progress of the flames. In this place, as in others where the crowding was greatest, the wind was the most destructive agent in spreading the Fire, which started at the roofs and burnt down. Sparks scattered

wide settled amid the dry timbers underneath the red tiles, or in the gables, and to many an anxious Londoner the first intimation that disaster was upon him was that his roof was ablaze. Where the Fire had passed rows of brick chimney stacks stood up alone, the timber structure of the houses about them having been wholly consumed or fallen in débris on the ground. "One sees in the City nothing but doorways and chimneys standing among ruins," wrote an onlooker afterwards.

Embedded in this confused mass of buildings were three churches. St. Mary Abchurch evidently burnt while its custodians were unprepared, for few relics survived the Fire, and among these is a register which still bears the marks of the flames, as if snatched away at the last moment. There is also a chalice dated "Antwerp, 1581." Rebuilt, St. Mary Abchurch stands to-day, a red-brick Wren church, with square leaden cupola and stunted spire; there is, too, a church of St. Clement Eastcheap; but only a still open graveyard in a by-way from Lombard Street, where land plots are perhaps the most valuable in the world, gives reminder of the old church dedicated to St. Nicholas, the patron of the money changers.

To an observer centrally situated, the points of the compass were marked by churches ablaze, throwing flames high above their roofless walls. London till the Great Fire—the fact is so often emphasized in this narrative—was still a city of a hundred towers and spires, and nowhere were churches more thickly congregated than in this wealthy quarter. St. Christopher-le-Stocks lay back, soon to be overwhelmed like the rest, St. Mildred Poultry

to the west, and southward St. Mary Woolchurch Hawe and the cloistered church of St. Stephen Walbrook. Let me bespeak remembrance for Mr. Langley, churchwarden of St. Mary Woolchurch Hawe at this fateful time, an exemplar to all his kind. He was clearing his house with hired help when the sexton and some parishioners came in hot haste to him, bearing the sacramental plate and books from the burning church—in all a cumbersome lot of parcels, for they included besides "the new great bible" and "embroidered beare cloths and cushings." He employed his men in saving the church property first, and, awaiting their return, saw his own house and its contents burnt over his head.

Lombard Street, Cornhill, and Threadneedle Street were burning, with all the courts about them; but the most threatening, the most fateful thing for London was not the mass of this central fire, but its slow and irresistible creep northwards. As every hour passed the Fire presented a yet broader front to the wind blowing from the east, the close alleys and passages, with houses crowded within a few feet of one another, being successively involved in disaster. From the direction of the Thames another fire burnt up Walbrook. The broad front of the separate fires united at the Stocks Market (to-day the Mansion House) in one great flame, which as night came on was driven by the wind towards Cheapside, "with such a dazzling light (says Vincent simply) and burning heat and roaring noise by the fall of so many houses together that was very amazing."

The Poultry lay directly in its path, and adjoining Bucklersbury — Shakespeare's Bucklersbury. Falstaff,

wooing Mistress Ford, professed, "I cannot cog, and say thou art this and that, like a many of these lisping hawthorn-buds, that come like women in men's apparel, and smell like Bucklersbury in simple time." Stow speaks of Bucklersbury, on both sides throughout, as occupied by grocers and apothecaries. The centre of the druggists' trade in the City it remained, almost to our own day. The fumes from the drugs, mixing with the smell of the burning pepper at the Royal Exchange, must have made this corner of peculiar horror in the Great Fire of London.

A strong building stood in Poultry, locked and barred, confining the prisoners committed by the Sheriffs. They were the first of many to whom the Fire of London restored liberty.[1] The short street was, however, chiefly notorious for its taverns. I recall the King's Head, only because of the story told of Charles II and the wife of William King, the landlord. The lady, happening to

[1] There were two Compters in the City, each under the control of a Sheriff. Wood Street Compter, established in 1555, and making a great figure in our more squalid literature, was removed to Giltspur Street in 1791. The other Compter was in the Poultry, and both, though they were merely lock-ups, were places of vile extortion. In each case there was a large staff to batten on the fees, consisting of a "secondary," a clerk of the papers, four clerk sitters, eighteen serjeants-at-mace, each serjeant with a yeoman, a master keeper and two turnkeys. A man might be interned for the simplest misdemeanour; but the exactions began at once. Was he sent to the Master's side? That was the dearest of all. The Knight's side was a little cheaper. If he chose to be placed in "the hole" he probably desired to escape therefrom after the briefest experience, and then he paid "garnish" at each door in the ascending scale as he went up higher.

be in labour on the great day of the Restoration, was anxious to see the returning Sovereign, and Charles, being informed of her wish, when passing through the Poultry good-naturedly stopped the pageant at the tavern, that he might salute the proud mother of his youngest subject. The house burnt to tinder, and for years lay in ruins before being rebuilt.

The late afternoon witnessed a great extension of the Fire westward. Towards the river lay the levelled and blackened area cleared on Sunday, whereon spasmodic fires burnt in cellars and buildings not wholly consumed. From its edge a line of bright flame, thin in the sunlight, extended from St. Swithin's Church, by London Stone, parallel with the Thames. Already the Fire was in the southern foot of the tributary streets which led up to Cheapside—Cordwainer Street, Friday Street, Bread Street, and others. St. Swithin's—the only church in London dedicated to the rainy saint—was of early fifteenth-century craftsmanship, a large church, with tower and belfry and chapels of St. Katherine and St. Anne. It had been embellished at great cost only two years before the Fire. There is preserved an inventory of plate and vestments, melancholy in its brevity, "which were all that were saved out of the late Dismal Fire of London." Two large silver flagons and two gilt cups with covers are the only items of note.

The historic London Stone withstood the Fire. If Crouch's *Londinenses Lacrymae* be an authority (one mistrusts a versifier) then it escaped unharmed—

> All things of beauty shatter'd, lost, and gone;
> Nothing of London whole but London Stone.

There is no other record that I could trace. There survives but a small fragment of what the Stone has been.

As the Fire burnt up St. Swithin's Lane it consumed Salters Hall, an ancient group of buildings formerly belonging to the Priory of Tortington, which at the Suppression had been granted by Henry VIII to John Earl of Oxford. Little beyond ruins of this relic of monastic London was left amid the large flower garden which to this day (though much reduced in area) makes a spot of bright colour at the heart of the world's finance. Most of the records perished in the Fire. The Salters had acquired the property only in 1641.

In Trinity Lane, next Garlick Hill, Paynter-Stainers Hall had stood since early in the sixteenth century. Alderman Sir John Brown, serjeant-painter to King Henry VIII, had dwelt there, and in 1532 he conveyed his residence to his fellow paynter-stainers for their hall. The few references to it known suggest an ornate house of some importance. It was entirely destroyed. The Paynter-Stainers Company possess the only contemporary picture of the Fire of London known to be authentic, the large panel painted and presented to them by Waggoner; they have, besides, one relic of the Fire of more than passing interest—the "Binding Book" of apprentices. The pages are much stained with water, and the charred condition of the cover and sides indicates that it has been through the flames. A single youth's indentures had been entered a fortnight before the Fire, and, being new, the book had perhaps been forgotten. The *Inspeximus* of 1467, Queen Elizabeth's subsequent grant, and other valuable documents were saved unharmed, as were the

plate and the pictures. Anciently the Company had the duty to seize all bad pictures and destroy them, but this difficult and invidious task they are now spared.

Out on the line of Thames Street three other churches burnt steadily, with the glare from warehouses and dwellings on fire all about them—St. Michael Queenhithe, St. Mary Somerset, and St. Mary Mounthaw. Not one of these names is to be found among City churches to-day, but the tower of St. Mary Somerset stands alone upon the street, a sphinx-like riddle to the wayfarer who comes unexpectedly upon it. He wonders what it is. This campanile is judged to be one of Sir Christopher Wren's finest works, and it was specially exempted from destruction when in 1872, under the Union of City Benefices Act, the demolition took place of the church built after the Great Fire.

"The bellowing wind," as an onlooker has described it, blew all day.

The King was repeatedly in the City during the progress of the Fire, setting an example of calm courage to the despairing people. The Duke of York was equally alert. Charles was not free from the prevailing feeling of panic, and realizing the peril that the Fire might spread even to Westminster, prepared to send away some of his portable treasures from Whitehall, lest the flames should reach out to devour them. His bearing in the presence of the citizens concealed all trace of alarm. He mixed freely with them, assisting them in their labour, sharing their perils, and more—for the excited state of the populace, English and alien, was such that there was

actual danger from the dagger of some lurking assassin. The "Short but True Account" of the Fire from the official *London Gazette* describes the admirable conduct of the people towards the King, but does not tell all. The inquirer who goes deeper alights upon passages that bring out with startling clearness the cowardice and greed and brutish violence that mixed with so much that was heroic in this time of appalling suffering.

London was disappearing in flames, for this was a riverside fire no longer. The flames had been driven up into the City, where now the houses of the better-class shopkeepers, prosperous merchants, and wealthy goldsmiths came crashing down. This Fire burnt like no other in men's experience. A street was alight at one end, and flames, as if spontaneously, burst out from windows twenty, thirty houses in advance of the approaching wave. Men who went late to bed at a distance from the Fire were awakened at dawn to find the roofs above them alight and smoke filling the rooms. Looking anxiously around, they saw other houses take fire, though no source from which they could have ignited was visible.

Amid the roof-gables the merciless wind whistled. Flakes of fire were driving overhead. But few made use of ears or eyes, or stayed to reason. What was done by the wind they attributed to human malice. Water in many places was not to be obtained, and whole streets, with the packed courts and alleys about them, were left to the flames without effort being made to arrest their progress. By the mischance of the first hours, the Thames water raised by the wheels at the Bridge had been

cut off. Bad as had been the conditions at the onset of the Fire, the shortage on this second day was being experienced in aggravated measure.

The actual cause of this I have already indicated, but the populace desired and believed a different explanation. Report spread over the town that our malignant enemies, the French and Dutch, had wilfully cut off the supply. Or else it was the work of malicious Papists, aiming at the complete destruction of the Protestant city. A story of this kind, wanting in no circumstantial detail, is told by Burnet on the authority of Bishop Lloyd, that one Grant, a Papist, had gone to the New River head at Islington, and there shut off the cocks on all the pipes that distributed the water over London, afterwards taking away the keys, so there was considerable delay in restoring the service. Like many another mendacity current at the time, it has proved to have no vestige of truth.

The frenzy grew on Monday, strongly contrasting with the spasmodic alarms and simulated calm of the previous day, when the Fire burnt only by the river. None could now feel safe, if still distant were those long tongues of flame, for north, west, and east the flakes scattered, spreading the Fire in all directions. Frenchmen and Dutchmen were the first suspects, being avowed enemies on land and sea, but on Monday the belief hardened that the Papists, too, were giving a hand in this demoniacal work. The populace turned to take vengeance on the foreigners.

Magistrates and soldiers worked strenuously to combat the Fire and clear the houses, while tumult raged about its outskirts. It is desirable to avoid exaggeration. A

little knot of people eager in any pursuit quickly collects a mob, and the mob takes courage by its numbers. The search for the hapless aliens was keen. Women—viragoes of the mean streets—joined in the man-hunt, more violent, more mendacious than the men. "They had," says one Denis de Repas, a Frenchman, "their corps de garde in several streets, and did knock down several strangers for not speaking good English. Some of them were armed with spits, some with bread-staffs, and the captains with a broadsword." He blames the women alone for having caused the trouble. He was himself "half-dead by the word of killing all French and Dutch," and thanks God it had been proved that the Fire came by mere accident, or rather from the hand of God.

Foreigners in London then, as at all times in this land of refuge, formed a numerous colony. "Owing to the great fire which has taken place here, I have not dared to go out," wrote a Dutchman—and he was wise. Those venturing to show themselves abroad were roughly seized and handed over to the guards by excited bystanders, who were prepared to swear they had taken them in the very act of throwing fireballs into the houses. Prisoners were apprehended having fireballs in their possession. In heated imaginations the crop grew as plentiful as mushrooms in a summer field. There was abundant evidence (if it could be believed) when everything not to be explained at a glance was held suspect. The gaols every hour received additional inmates against whom incendiarism was alleged on the flimsiest pretexts. At sight of the prisoners being marched off under guard

the anger of the street mob rose, each man believing his worst suspicions to be confirmed.

A justice of the peace, Dawes Weymansel, told that a man he saw stopped and apprehended when entering the City at Temple Bar had his pockets stuffed with flax, tow, and such like materials for fire. Michael Marsh, a company officer of the Trained Bands, arrested a Walloon at the Nag's Head in Leadenhall Street. The foreigner was carrying a dark lantern, made (as his captor conceived) to lay a train of powder, and then containing powder. Two others of his countrymen were in his company. Three persons in unison attested that they had seen a man throw something into a house near St. Antholin's Church; immediately thereafter the place was in flames. Men handled, too, certain "black things, of a long figure" seized from a suspect, and of mysterious use, but manifestly diabolical, for none could endure to keep them in the hand by reason of their intense heat.

Tales such as these ran through the choked streets, enlarging as they went. Every one became apprehensive. A poor widow hurried from the Fire through Moorfields, with chickens she had saved in the lap of her apron. She was attacked and grievously maltreated, the little fluffy things being taken to be fire-balls. Spectators in Moorfields witnessed a Frenchman assailed by a mob and almost dismembered, because he carried "balls of fire" with him in a chest. They were found to be tennis-balls after the damage to the man had been done. The King, on learning of these outrages, appointed members of the Privy Council, with guards, to various quarters of the City, with powers summarily to repress

disorder. Even they thought it not safe to declare that they believed the Fire came by accident, or that it was not a plot of the Dutch and French and Papists to destroy the City. Sir Edward Southcote, passing to his country seat through London while the City was still burning, had one of his servants seized, a Frenchman, the man being overheard to speak broken English, but by explanations and gift of half-a-crown to the captors for drink obtained his release.

The excitement spread over the whole town, and ever new rumours took form as bands of alarmed refugees swarmed through the main streets, loaded with the first belongings they could hastily snatch up, and anxious only to place safety between themselves and the still advancing flames; and boats, laden to the water's edge, made away from the Fire up river.

Far off at Westminster, Cornelius Riedtveldt, a Dutch baker, lit his oven fire, for London, though its houses burn, must eat bread, and the thrifty Dutchman lose no chance of gaining good English money. Seeing smoke rising from the chimney, the people cried out that the rogue was trying to burn down that end of the town as well. They dragged him into the street, and would have left him lifeless had not, by a fortunate chance, the Duke of York happened to ride by at that moment. The baker was apprehended, and only after some days of imprisonment in Westminster Gatehouse returned to find his home plundered and his means of livelihood gone. His petition to Lord Arlington for release is in the State Papers. Himself, his wife, and certain lodgers had been committed upon a false suggestion of wicked practices

that they did utterly detest and abhor. By violence of the mob their goods were taken from them, so that they had not means to subsist.

Hundreds of houses had been burnt down the previous night, but few citizens had actual need to pass the hours under the stars. Good Samaritans gave the shelter of their roofs. The churches—some, like Christ Church, Newgate Street, Austin Friars, and St. Paul's, of vast size—and the Companies' Halls alone might have afforded refuge to a population greater than that left homeless. Less than a dozen such buildings in all had been reached by Sunday's flames. The flight on Monday was to the fields, few people choosing to add to their own cares and anxieties the duty of hospitality to neighbours; and still fewer were those into whom the panic of fire had struck deep willing to trust themselves and their belongings anywhere in the burning city.

Slow progress in flight was at best possible. Often, indeed, none could be made, the multitude of carts and loads in the streets obstructing those who sought to escape, as well as hindering the few who laboured to put out the fire. Had there been a single broad, straight thoroughfare east and west, and another north, London might have emptied its population with less difficulty. The City, with its narrow, tortuous ways, seemed designed to prevent people getting out. There was, indeed, no great peril to life. The cause of all the confusion lay deeply rooted in human nature, in the overmastering desire of each man to remove as much of his goods as could be saved from the flames, leaving the Fire to go its own way. These first excited bands of people, making

all possible haste to leave the City for the safety of the open country, had seen the Fire overwhelm their own dwellings; and they were but the forerunners of a greater pilgrimage. The exodus which began on Monday increased in volume as the evening approached, and lasted throughout the night. Ceaselessly it continued during Tuesday, the worst day of panic.

In the turmoil of the Fire the City Wall became an obstruction, blocking the way of people who were anxious only to reach the fields.

About the gates two crowds mingled. From the edge of the Fire and far in advance of it came a doleful stream of humanity, men transformed into beasts of burden, led horses equally loaded, carts piled high with household goods; the men hot and excited, shoving, fighting, swearing. In their ears was the roar of the flames, which behind them leapt from conquest to conquest. The thud of falling houses added to the terrors of the flight, though still in the daylight the Fire seemed so little spectacularly to have accomplished so much. Women and children bore their lesser burdens, for at such a time every shoulder had value. There were many to whom the Fire offered only the prospect of profit, and their greed to make the most of the people's distress deadened the better sense of helpfulness and pity.

"Any money is given for help," writes Vincent; "five, ten, twenty, and thirty pounds for a cart, to bear forth into the fields some choice things, which were ready to be consumed, and some of the countrymen had the conscience to accept of the highest price which the citizens did then offer in their extremity. I am mistaken

if such money do not burn worse than the fire out of which it was rak'd." There is hardly a letter sent out of London which does not condemn the extortions of these soulless harpies. Waterhouse writes in deep indignation—

"Many had paid out their all on Saturday, their pay day, and those who had then drained themselves were certainly put to great straits, being either forced to give one part (of their goods) to carry away the rest or to leave all to the fire. The mercies of the fire were cruel to all that it came near; the flight from it gave opportunity for miscarriage of thousands of pounds' worth of goods, and to many thefts of goods lodged in open places, fields and others, for perfect riddance out of danger and hoped for security from it, which, as it frowardly proved, became a removal out of the danger of fire into a den of thieves. The riches of London and the substance of the inhabitants thereof were as well devoured by suburban thieves and by the countrymen's extortion for their carts and conveyances as by the Fire; all of which had their respective share in laying a load upon London's broken back, and upon the distraction of, and within, it. Some I hope to have been very honest and reasonable, but into those honest and happy hands God knows many of my goods fell not, nor the goods of thousands more, but into the hands of those harpies that devoured all they took, and cried 'Give, give!' never to return again."

Taswell's parents, whose house was consumed, lost goods worth £40 in their hasty removal by persons who offered their assistance as porters, but were, he declares, in reality nothing else but downright plunderers.

The flying people pushed a way through another stream coming into the City—labourers from parts not yet touched, from the suburbs outside the wall, and from the surrounding villages, the larger proportion eager for the money which was so easily to be earned. The men from the country brought in their carts. With them came many thieves, who lurked in the abandoned shops, pilfering and stealing among the goods which the tradesmen in their haste had been compelled to leave behind. They had at least this excuse, that what they did not take the flames would reduce to nothing.

Troops in the streets, assisted by the disciplined Trained Bands, secured control in the immediate neighbourhood of the Fire. Beyond its limits confusion grew worse as the hours passed, and still the flames made headway. The citizens accepted the presence of the military as relieving them of what should have been a first duty, and it became evident that for checking the spread of the Fire the authorities could rely only upon their own men, and such others as could be hired. But a problem still more grave confronted those upon whom responsibility rested. The broken roads made many places impassable, trenches being left open where the water pipes had been laid bare and cut to get at the supply. Horses plunged and fell, and at times carts loaded with salved goods had to be abandoned and burnt where they stood, owing to the impossibility of further progress. The afternoon had not far advanced when an order was given that henceforward no carts were to be admitted to the neighbourhood of the Fire.

In taking this extreme course, the magistrates sought

to serve a double purpose, believing that thereby they might compel the people to assist in subduing the Fire, and at the same time avoid the entire blocking of the streets which was threatened. It failed to effect the first of these ends, and the next day was rescinded. The determination to save whatever possessions could be handled proved too strong to be overborne. The result was a return to primeval conditions. The rich became abject, the poor insolent. The brawny porter measured the capacity of his muscle and the breadth of his back to carry a load against the money-bags of the merchant citizen, and made his bargain, knowing that for once there had come into his life a moment when no longer he was the under-dog. There was work for all who could give this service, the only service which counted.

CHAPTER V

THE NIGHT SCENE

THE Fire burnt back slowly against the strong east wind, which blew unobstructed over the open expanse of the river, protecting the stores below bridge ranged along its bank. Not until six o'clock on Monday evening did the flames reach Billingsgate, though the quays lay scarcely one hundred and fifty yards distant from the seat of the outbreak in Pudding Lane. Away from the Thames they made greater headway. The church of St. Mary-at-Hill had already been attacked, and when darkness fell was largely destroyed, with the still considerable remains of the Abbot of Waltham's inn adjoining, and all day a strenuous contest had waged for the preservation of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East.

John Dolben, Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster, there gave to the frightened citizens an example of what resolute men might accomplish.

Dolben was one of those soldier priests of whom the Civil War produced many. He had joined the Royalist Forces round King Charles's standard at Oxford, and while carrying the colours at Marston Moor received a musket ball in the shoulder. Later he was in York when the city was besieged by Fairfax, and a shot wound in the thigh, breaking the bone, laid him helplessly aside

while the King's fortunes toppled to disaster. Often during the strife he had stood sentinel. The peril of the Fire revived the soldier spirit beneath the cassock. Assembling the Westminster School boys in a strong company, he marched at their head through the City to the eastern limits of the Fire, and there kept them hard at work for many hours fetching water from the back of St. Dunstan's. They extinguished the flames in the houses crowded closely together, and the church isolated by their efforts, and conspicuous over the City by reason of its high leaden steeple, stood after the Fire of London was out, grievously defaced, it is true, but not the mere ruin to which so many others were reduced.

St. Dionis Backchurch was left with bare walls when the Fire burnt at evening down Fenchurch Street. Burials in the littered ground shortly afterwards indicate the havoc wrought; Francis Tryon, merchant, "in the ruins of the chancel," Richard Cooke, "in the ruins of the body of the church"—there are other entries of like significance in the register. The flames consumed Turners Hall, then standing in Philpot Lane.

Leadenhall had been new-built by Simon Eyre, a fifteenth-century civic magnate, and was made a store-house for arms during the Civil War. The City apprentices in 1648 invaded Leadenhall and mastered the magazine, crying out "For God and King Charles!" It was saved from the Fire with only its western front damaged, thanks to the enterprise of an Alderman who deserved well of the City. His name cannot be recalled. Stepping up with a hatful of money, he threw it among the people, encouraging them to renewed effort; "he

alone there, under God, gave a check to the Fire," says an onlooker. This was the first point at which the Fire was stopped, making no further progress; the first definite result to be shown after forty-eight hours' conflict with the flames. Leadenhall sheltered East India House, and it stood untouched. The East India Company were, indeed, fortunate above the majority of merchants, for they lost in the Great Fire of London only their saltpetre warehouse and their pepper, all their other stores, worth in the bulk a fabulous sum, having escaped the conflagration.

Westward along the river the Fire was flaming at nine o'clock that Monday evening in Baynard's Castle, by Blackfriars, a grey fortress-palace, built by Humphrey Duke of Gloucester in 1428, which had replaced the earlier castle of Robert FitzWalter, Banneret of the City in the reign of King John. The name survives in Castlebaynard Ward, but few people recall to-day that, until the Fire, this stronghold stood guard at the western end of the walled City as austerely as did the Norman Tower of London at the east. Its stone turrets, pierced with windows, rose high and gaunt at the water's edge, and boat stairs stretched over the tide. King Henry VII, liking this palace by the waterside, attempted to transform its frown and render it more fitting for Royal use; but still the frown remained. Richard III, with crafty simulation of unwillingness, accepted the English Crown in Baynard's Castle—

> Alas, why would you heap these cares on me?
> I am unfit for state and majesty:
> I do beseech you, take it not amiss;
> I cannot nor I will not yield to you.

Its stones were the stuff of England's history, and every one must have been known to Shakespeare, whose house in Ireland Yard, and the Blackfriars Theatre, were close by. Wolsey, not yet at the zenith of his power, pleaded before Henry VIII at Baynard's Castle. Queen Jane lost a realm when the Council of State, assembled there, pronounced against her. Elizabeth was Lord Pembroke's guest for a water party.

"The flinty walls of Baynard's strong built castle, thought by the inhabitants that westward dwelt a powerful garrison against the flames, yield like a paper building to the Fire," wrote Wiseman.[1] It burnt all through the night, and was still ablaze at seven o'clock next morning. Baynard's Castle, with all its memories, was lost to London. The walls, broken and threatening collapse at any moment, were speedily thereafter pulled down, leaving upstanding two turrets that were substantially repaired for habitation, one of which survived until 1720, and fragments of the lower structure, built into dwelling-houses, till the beginning of last century, when the site was cleared for the premises of the Carron Iron Company.

The time of the outbreak, when darkness had already fallen, the height and mass of the building, its position at the water's edge, all combined to make the destruction of Baynard's Castle the most gorgeous spectacle of the Fire of London. Flames ran along the wide façade from window to window till all the river front was sheathed in fire, and above the battlements leapt roaring into the skies, fed from the seething cauldron below. It

[1] Sam. Wiseman, *Short Description of the Burning of London*, 1666.

is a mere empty shell that is portrayed in Hollar's engraving made after the Fire. Imagination will fill out the sparse references left by contemporaries; will picture the fierce light cast over the moving water; the tideway crowded with boats; the anxious, upturned faces; the heat and the noise; and, by contrast, the darkened area back from the river bank, fogged by smoke, whereon destruction's work had been done and there was nothing left to burn. With the turn of the tide pools of blazing tallow and fragments of over-toppled timber houses, still burning, floated by. Far away beyond Billingsgate, little short of a mile distant, bright flame again marked the Fire's eastern extremity, and still it crept onward.

The water's edge was illuminated by isolated fires, which burnt for days thereafter among stores of oil, coal, tallow, and other combustible stocks brought up by the ships.

A great curving bow, stretching from Blackfriars to Threadneedle Street and Leadenhall, made the line of the Fire inland. "A dreadful bow it was, such as mine eyes never before had seen; a bow which had God's arrow in it with a flaming point: it was a shining bow; not like that in the cloud, which brings water with it, and withal signifies God's covenant not to destroy the world any more with water: but it was a bow which had fire in it, which signified God's anger, and his intention to destroy London with fire." Like the pious Vincent, whose words are quoted, many of those who watched at night saw in this appalling conflagration the hand of a higher Power.

Only in the heart of the City was the Fire at this stage

of great depth. Its nucleus was about the Stocks Market (to-day the Mansion House) and in the narrow ways north and south of the Poultry and south of Cheapside, where it burnt in one confused mass. Night had fallen almost unnoticed by those who stayed amid the heat and swelter to save their property, and those—fewer in number—who still laboured to fight the flames. Light was not wanting, for the blaze illuminated the streets like the sun at noon. Again I turn to Vincent for an onlooker's account of the dreadful spectacle:

"If you opened your eyes to the opening of the street, where the fire was come, you might see in some places whole streets at once in flames, that issued from the opposite windows, which folding together, were united into one great flame throughout the whole street; and then you may see the houses tumble, tumble, tumble, from one end of the street to the other with a great crash, leaving the foundations open to the view of the heavens." He likens the noise of the Fire to the passage of a thousand iron chariots beating together upon the stones.

John Evelyn describes the night sky as bearing a fiery aspect, like the top of a burning oven.

The streets were still choked with excited people, whose running to and fro, with the further obstruction of goods which had been thrust out of doors or flung from the windows, made a passage-way difficult. There was work for every one who could bear a load. With goods heaped on their backs, or slung from the shoulders, men hurried away to places where carts were permitted to draw up beyond the limits of the Fire. When carts could not be obtained, they plodded along with their

burdens right out of the City gates. Others came in to offer their help as porters, exacting rates of hire which every hour became more extortionate. There were places where none could approach, where the Fire consumed everything with irresistible fury, and stone walls, riven and calcined white, stood out with painful intensity amidst the yellow flames and pillars of smoke rising from the burning timber houses.

Soldiers drawn up across the streets at many points prevented both egress and access. In bewilderment the carriers plunged into the maze of narrow courts and alleys to find a means of escape from the conquering flames. The hive was in a turmoil, and as momentarily the noise of the Fire died down, there rose from the streets, loud above all other sounds, a medley of human voices. Neither the fall of night nor the east wind, still blowing freshly, brought any relief from the overpowering heat of the burning city. "The Fire," one wrote, "carried the noise of a whirlwind in it, and was so informed with terror that it surprised the eyes and hearts of men with fear, as well as their houses and goods with flame."

Little idea of the Fire's extent could be gained by those close at hand. It had grown so vast that a true estimate was possible only from a considerable distance. Seen from any high roof or church tower away by the City's northern wall, the panorama of flame spread out in all its appalling significance.

Masses of close buildings lay at the spectator's feet, not yet involved, but obviously awaiting destruction. No work of men's hands could stay the approach of flames like these, with the wind ever driving them on. Beyond

the house roofs still intact flames shot into the sky in a long quivering line, throwing up myriads of sparks, and lighting with a weird incandescence the clouds of smoke which rolled away. A bright moon had shone during the smaller fire of Sunday night, lighting the task of Pepys as he carried his household goods at Seething Lane into his garden in readiness for removal. On Monday night the moon was no longer visible in the yellow glare.

Evelyn found language inadequate for the scene. "Oh, the miserable and calamitous spectacle! such as haply (he writes) the world had not seen since the foundation of it, nor be outdone till the universal conflagration thereof. God grant mine eyes may never behold the like, who now saw about 10,000 houses all in one flame! The noise and cracking and thunder of the impetuous flames, the shrieking of women and children, the hurry of people, the fall of towers, houses, and churches, was like a hideous storm; and the air all about so hot and inflamed, that at the last one was not able to approach it, so that they were forced to stand still, and let the flames burn on, which they did, for near two miles in length and one in breadth."[1] Others, too, have described the splendid horrors of the night.

Away from the actual flames the City presented a spectacle that must have imprinted itself upon the memory of those who witnessed it. Above the general level of the house roofs, where towers and church spires rose, the

[1] Evelyn's *Diary*, 1666, Sept. 3. The diarist, recording his impressions, enlarges the actual facts: at no time were ten thousand houses burning together, nor did Monday's line of fire, great as it was, extend two miles in length.

stone face square to the Fire reflected an intense light. So over London, beyond the Wall to its farthest extremity, each steeple stood up as a white lamp above the darker mass of the buildings. Far as the eye reached this illumination of the spires extended, with the visual effect, not of throwing them back, but of drawing all in close together. The larger part of a hundred towers flashed back a hundred signals to the burning City.

The Fire had already mastered nearly one-half of the City within the Wall. Fear that it could not be kept from the Liberties became acute. At midnight Lord Manchester, Lord Hollis, and other magistrates made a hasty survey of Fleet Street, beyond the Fleet River, and an hour later ordered the pulling down of some houses in Whitefriars.

New outbursts of fire disclosed where some large and important building had been attacked. A great bunch of flame rose out of Baynard's Castle, at the western extremity by the river, and burning in front of it were two churches, St. Benet Paul's Wharf and St. Peter Paul's Wharf, by Thames Street. The former contained Inigo Jones's marble monument, which was destroyed with the church. The Fire reached out to Derby House, which Queen Mary had granted in 1554 to the Heralds for their College, leaving it a blackened ruin, but thanks to the diligence of the Officers at Arms the rolls and records of chivalry were saved with insignificant loss, and were given temporary lodging at Whitehall by the King.

Woodmongers Hall, by the waterside, was alight and on Lambeth Hill Blacksmiths Hall belched its flames into the open churchyard of St. Mary Magdalen.

Old Fish Street burnt throughout its length, the flames continuing along Knightrider Street till they died down among the debris which covered Cannon Street, already levelled by the morning's fire. Two important churches were consumed here. St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, built upon Old Fish Street, and St. Nicholas Olave were close neighbours. Cole Abbey church, an ancient fabric, stood so low where the land by centuries' accumulation had risen about it that worshippers descended by steps to the nave. It had passed into the patronage of the Crown at the Restoration, on the attainder and execution of Colonel Francis Hacker, to whom the advowson had belonged. It was to him that the warrant for the execution of Charles I was addressed, and he had commanded the guard before Whitehall at the final scene.

The Fire was in the foot of Friday Street, whence it burnt to Cordwainers Hall, and was flaming up Bread Street towards Cheapside, leaving beneath heaped ruins the beautiful vault of Gerrard's Hall—the home of Gerrard the Giant, famous among London's fabled monsters.[1] It survived to be destroyed by vandals of the nineteenth century. Early as the days of Edward I the bakers of London had held their market in Bread Street, being forbidden to sell bread at their houses or shops, but the custom had fallen into disuse, and at the time of the Great Fire the thoroughfare was chiefly occupied by prosperous merchants, whose signs swung out with those of many popular taverns: the Three Cups, the Star, and the George were here. Above the mass

[1] The familiar story of this London giant is told by John Stow. The tavern sign is in the Guildhall Museum.

of burning houses the towers of two churches stood out conspicuously, white in the intense light. In Allhallows Bread Street Milton was baptized. You may read the entry in the register, which was saved from the fire—

> The xxth day of December, 1608, was baptized John the sonne of John Milton the Scrivener.

A modern tablet erected on a block of offices marks where the church stood. Milton's father had a house in Bread Street with the sign of the Spread Eagle. It was destroyed in the Great Fire, and its site cannot now be identified, but the existence till recent years of Spread Eagle Court, near where Bread Street enters Cheapside, probably indicates the location. According to Aubrey, a contemporary, "The only inducement of several foreigners to visit England was to see the Protector Cromwell and Mr. John Milton, and they would see the house and chamber where he was born." This was, of course, before *Paradise Lost* was written.

St. Mildred Bread Street burnt with the neighbouring church of Allhallows. The Fire, consuming the church and entire parish of St. John the Evangelist, was more cruel than the Plague, for the bills of mortality show that in the previous year this was the one City parish that escaped the infection.

Near by, at the edge of the Fire's deep "bow," flames rose from St. Mary Aldermary. That this was a large and distinguished church may be concluded from the present edifice. It is the only City church known to have been designed as a copy of that destroyed in the Great Fire, though it cannot now be told how far Wren

obeyed the proviso of Henry Rogers, a benefactor who left £5000 for the rebuilding with that express direction. St. Mary's differs from every other of Wren's ecclesiastical structures. The earlier church had been built by Henry Keeble, Lord Mayor, who died in 1518. Modern street improvements have made St. Mary Aldermary, with its high tower, one of the few conspicuous churches in the City.

North of the Poultry the Fire, threatening each moment to enter Cheapside, met with a formidable obstruction of stone buildings, and for hours made no further advance. Flame rose and fell, searching the walls and lighting the now roofless chambers of what was still a corner of monastic London, surviving the Reformation. This had been the College of St. Thomas of Acon. The religious property was acquired by the wealthy Mercers Company from King Henry VIII at the Suppression, and they retained St. Thomas's Church, on the rear ground, as Mercers Chapel. It was a perfect example, exquisitely wrought, of a great period of ecclesiastical architecture. There, too, was kept the grammar school. Mercers Hall, standing towards Cheapside, was an early sixteenth-century structure, erected by Sir John Allen over a vaulted chapel.

The Mercers premises filled the whole space between Old Jewry and Ironmonger Lane, save where at Old Jewry corner stood St. Mary Colechurch, "builded (says Stow) upon a vault above ground, so that men are forced to ascend up thereunto by certain steps." St. Mary's was not re-erected after the Fire, but its name is lodged imperishably in London annals. Peter of Colechurch

(curate or chantry priest of this church) built old London Bridge.

The Fire, confined by the stone walls and unable for the time to conquer them, raged with the utmost fierceness. Everything not actually of stone was consumed, the timber used in floors and roofs and the smaller buildings feeding the flames. Leaping high into the night sky, these dominated the lesser fires burning all around. The Mercers Company still possess their famous Legh Cup, presented by Sir Thomas Legh, which bears the London hall-mark, 1499, and also their historic silver yard measure. Much of their prized old plate was, however, destroyed, no less than two hundred pounds of silver, melted into shapeless masses, being afterwards dug out of the ruins, and sold by way of commencing a fund for rebuilding the hall. Incidentally the Great Fire shattered the last link of the long association with the Mercers of the sea-trading Company of Merchant Adventurers, chartered by Edward I, whose office under Mercers Hall was consumed with the rest. A relic of the connection is preserved in the Master's hammer, which with other arms bears those of the Merchant Adventurers.

Pepys, passing by on Wednesday—"our feet ready to burn, walking through the town among the hot coals"—picked up in the street a piece of the coloured glass from Mercers Chapel windows, prizing it as a curiosity. It lay about in heaps, so melted and buckled by the Fire as to look like parchment.

Across Threadneedle Street, creeping onwards in the direction of the City wall, was the northern horn of the

crescent of bright flame which had its western extremity in Blackfriars.

So far as the City had yet emptied itself, the rush of people had been chiefly into Moorfields and Finsbury Fields. These were large level spaces beyond the City's northern wall; incidentally the drying ground of London's laundresses—what most impressed Sir William Davenant about Moorfields, two or three years before the Fire, were their "acres of old linen, making a show like the fields of Carthagena when the five months' shifts of the whole fleet are washt and spread." London was perilously open to attack from this ground, and traces still remained of the formidable line of military works erected there for its defence in the Civil War. More lasting than these mounds was the drainage which had been carried out to render the ground hard for the movements of artillery. Much, too, had been done by the City authorities in the reign of James I, in covering part of the soil with pleasant walks, and converting the marshes into a place of recreation for the citizens.

The advantages of all this work came to be realized when the refugees from the flames fled into Moorfields. The place offered no shelter, but otherwise was not inhospitable. A legend that John Bunyan drew inspiration for his pen picture of the Slough of Despond from the swamp north of London is probably untrue, but there is contemporary evidence of its evil condition early in the same century, when it was described as "a most noisome and offensive place, a rotten moorish ground, burrowed and crossed with deep stinking ditches and noisome common sewers."

Homeless London camped that night wherever open ground was available, the greatest assemblage being in Moorfields and Finsbury. They were the largest spaces near at hand. Few of the fugitives had troubled to bring covering, or had, indeed, thought of it, their chief anxiety having been to save from the flames the most valuable of their movable possessions. Thousands of London's citizens lay down beside their goods, heaped anywhere on the ground, to snatch brief intervals of broken sleep under the stars. A common calamity obliterated all distinctions of rank and wealth. Rich and poor herded together. Most fortunate was the poor man, who had small loss to bemoan, and whose life had inured him to the hardship which of a sudden had become the lot of all.

Still out of the gates through the night a line of exiles continued to stream, apparently interminable, moving slowly with their hampering loads. The rough camp forming outside the City increased in area as each hour passed. No rain fell, but a wind, unnaturally heated, blew into the faces of groups of burdened men, women and children, stumbling along.

Behind them London Wall stood up, bare and unencumbered by houses, lit by the universal glare. Over its level line flames leapt high into the sky, and the dense smoke that rose, illuminated by sparks, and drifted away, gave the illusion from a distance that the entire City was on fire All separate sounds were merged into a sullen, consistent roar like the wash of a tremendous tide. Frequent explosions and the crash of falling walls made the effect still more impressive.

CHAPTER VI

THE DAY OF LONDON'S TRAGEDY

THE destruction of Cheapside, which began with daybreak, gave a dramatic opening to Tuesday, the 4th September, the most momentous and terrible in its results of all the days of the Fire. It witnessed the burning of St. Paul's Cathedral and of the Guildhall, and the Fire bursting through the City Wall into the Liberties; a great body of flame, still driven onward by the relentless wind, sweeping over an area larger than that which had been cleared on the two preceding days. Lord Arlington gave expression to the general despair in a despatch sent off that morning. "The fire has burnt as far into the body of the City as St. Paul's, with such violence that no art or pains can meddle with it; all our hopes are now, under God, in cutting off a part of the town along by Holborn Bridge and so down to Bridewell, to see whether we can save this." Hardly was the ink dry on the paper before even these slender hopes were defeated.

The Fire had been very near Cheapside all night. A temporary check was occasioned at the eastern end by the stone-built Mercers Chapel, but to the goldsmiths and other wealthy merchants of this famous thoroughfare, watching with nervous apprehension for their own for-

tunes, the roar told of the flames' steady approach along Friday Street, Bread Street, Soper Lane and other tributary streets to the south. And still more ominous to London were flames creeping down from the north, where there were separate small fires. Cheapside was the one wide market street of the mediæval walled city that had survived, but little changed, till Charles II.

Wide and straight, with a bend where before St. Paul's stood isolated the little church of St. Michael-le-Querne, its line was continued by Newgate Street, which also had an open market space. A well-known French print of the procession of Maria de Medici on her arrival in England in 1638 gives undoubtedly an exaggerated idea of the spaciousness of Cheapside. But the print preserves the character of the houses in the time of Charles I, and they had changed but little—if at all—in the succeeding thirty years till the Fire. Cheapside's most striking buildings were Goldsmiths' Row, ten dwelling-houses and fourteen shops situated on the south side, a little west of Bow Church. They had been erected by Thomas Wood, a master of the craft, and Sheriff in 1491. Stow declared them to be "the most beautiful frame of fair houses and shops that be within the walls of London, or elsewhere in England." Four storeys high they stood, decorated towards the street with the Goldsmiths' arms, with painted and gilt images of "woodmen" riding upon monstrous beasts.

Cheapside was the goldsmiths' headquarters. The wealth of the street had impressed itself upon the imagination of Paul Hentzner, a German traveller in England in the last years of Elizabeth's reign. "It surpasses all the

rest (he says). There are to be seen in this street all sorts of gold and silver vessels exposed to sale, as well as ancient and modern medals, as must surprise a man the first time he sees and considers them." It was the show street of London, the processional way whenever the Sovereign visited the City. King Charles I, riding through, had noticed that certain of the goldsmiths' shops had been taken by milliners, booksellers, and like meaner trades, and that goldsmiths had established themselves as far west as Temple Bar, migrating where rents were cheaper. Concerned for Cheapside's beauty and significance in London, the monarch arbitrarily ordered that these meaner tradesmen should be ejected. Goldsmiths who had set up elsewhere were to return, on pain of fine and imprisonment.

The Standard, or water conduit, in Cheapside survived till the Great Fire, to be left in ruins as the flames crossed the street. Puritan intolerance had overturned the beautiful Cross, pulled down in 1644 by order of the Long Parliament, "a noise of trumpets sounding the while" as the fell work was accomplished. In place of this historic memorial of the first Edward's love for Queen Eleanor (so rapid is the descent to the ridiculous) there stood out another in the street. Howel, a contemporary historian, records that upon the demolition of this ancient monument "there was another new one popp'd up in Cheapside, hard by the Standard, viz., a high square table of stone, left in legacy by one Russel, a porter, and well-minded man, with this distich engraven—

> God blesse the Porter who great pains doth take,
> Rest here, and welcome when thy back doth ake."

"Cheapside is all in a light fire in a few hours' time (writes Vincent). From Soper Lane, Bow Lane, Bread Street, Friday Street, and Old Change the fire comes up almost together, and breaks furiously into the broad street, and most of that side of the way was together in flames, a dreadful spectacle! And then partly by the fire which came down by Mercers Chapel, partly by the fall of houses cross the way, the other side is quickly kindled, and doth not long stand after it." A glance at a map shows at once the supreme importance of Cheapside in the Fire. Could the great mass of flame burning up from the river have been stayed on its south side and prevented from crossing, it would have been a lesser task to save both the northern and the western parts of the city. The opportunity was wholly neglected. When the Fire was in Cheapside, not ten men stood by helping or calling for help.

Warned in good time the goldsmiths had mostly stored their money and valuables in the Tower of London. Thanks to this wise precaution, their individual losses were insignificant compared with those of other tradesmen. Goldsmiths Hall in Foster Lane was consumed when the Fire spread so far. The flames spared nothing that made Cheapside famous; but to the living generation, not the goldsmiths' shops, not Bow Church, but the taverns we would by choice recall, if choice there could be. What would we not give for any substantial relic, spared by the Fire, of the old Mermaid Tavern, though it be but a single room that we might enter and find preserved just as it was when Shakespeare and Ben Jonson and Middleton and Beaumont sat there?—

What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whence they came,
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolv'd to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life; then when there hath been thrown
Wit able enough to justify the town
For three days past; wit that might warrant be
For the whole city to talk foolishly
Till that were cancell'd; and when that was gone,
We left an air behind us, which alone
Was able to make the two next companies
(Right witty, though but downright fools) more wise.

Francis Beaumont sent to Ben Jonson these familiar lines upon the old tavern. Did but a single room of the Mermaid survive to-day it would, I fancy, be a place of cosmopolitan resort in London attracting more pilgrims even than visit Westminster Abbey. Old it was even in 1666, and timber-built, no doubt, with stout oaken frames and rough plaster over laths and high roof gables, so would burn furiously, for the house is mentioned as early as 1462, and stood back from the highway, with entrances in Cheapside, Bread Street, and Friday Street. Nothing had changed since Shakespeare had known it. The Great Fire of London spared not a stick. Other taverns besides, to London's irreparable loss, perished in this time—

The Mitre in Cheapside, and then the Bull Head,
And many like places that make noses red,

as jovial Ben Jonson's couplet describes them. The Mitre, unlike the Mermaid, was not rebuilt. This, too, was a fifteenth-century house, standing by the Great Con-

duit. The Bull Head in Cheapside had its glorious day when Monck, preparing for the Restoration, made it his headquarters: "Multitudes of people followed him there, congratulating his coming into the City, making loud shouts, bonfires, and ringing of bells." The Half Moon in Cheapside was burnt in the Great Fire, rebuilt, and again destroyed by fire in 1821. To list all would be wearisome when the Mermaid, preserving the very spirit of Shakespeare's London, stands in memory—

> Souls of poets dead and gone,
> What Elysium have ye known,
> Happy field or mossy cavern,
> Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

Much else was lost in Cheapside. The street which had signified so much in five centuries of London's history (and it would take another volume to tell all) passed out of existence in the Great Fire of 1666. It could not be recalled ; and, in truth, those who rebuilt on the ground, with plain brick and stiff formality, made no attempt to revive its ancient picturesqueness. A typical house erected immediately after the Fire stood until 1928, bearing upon its front a carved stone sign of the Chained Swan. I find in a sentence of a letter penned while the ruins were still hot all that is needed to convey a sense of the utter desolation wrought: "You may stand where Cheapside was, and see the Thames!"

St. Mary-le-Bow, left roofless, with the choir destroyed and tower blackened by flame and smoke when the Fire had passed, represented more than a parish church—"more famous," says Stow, "than any other parish church of the whole city or suburbs." Its rank as second in

importance only to the Cathedral of St. Paul itself rests upon the jurisdiction enjoyed for so many centuries by the Court of Arches established there. To-day St. Mary-le-Bow's tall steeple, and its great dragon vane turning with every change of the wind, are known to thousands of people who would have difficulty in naming another City church. To be born within sound of Bow Bells gives the birthright to a Londoner.

The old church was but mean and low, and did not stand out to Cheapside, as does its successor. The tower rose at the north-west angle. It had served mediæval London as a beacon to guide the few solitary travellers who frequented the streets after nightfall, lamps being shown in the lantern pinnacles. The Norman crypt, from which the church takes its name, was happily spared to us by the Fire, and by Sir Christopher Wren, whose habit when dealing with early buildings was to spare but little. It is one of the most perfect relics of ancient London that survives. The vaulting consists of a large number of intersecting arches (or "bows") springing from fine Norman columns, and partly supported by basement walls which appear to contain still earlier work. The steeple is known in detail from its representation upon a silver church seal, bearing date 1580, which was turned up when the debris after the Great Fire was searched, and to-day is kept in Bow Church. It is of interest to recall that Wren designed for his new church an open stone colonnade upon Cheapside between the tower and Bow Lane, which would have been a striking architectural feature, but had not the means at disposal to take the land required from the shops.

The baptismal register (the vestry minutes were burnt) has this entry—

Kasia, ye daughter of Morgan Dandy was borne 2 Sept. 1666 (being ye day ye dreadful Fire began in London) and baptzd. in ye Country.

Two days after the flames were in Cheapside, and the infant Kasia and her suffering mother, carried on a bed through the streets surging with people, left their home to its fate.

St. Peter Chepe was not rebuilt, and its destruction in the Fire has left a little oasis of green churchyard familiar to all City men by the Wood Street corner, where a plane tree bursts into leaf in summer, and Wordsworth heard a thrush singing. The three dwarf houses standing before the plane tree are the tiniest buildings in Cheapside, and, indeed, of the whole City, for each consists of a shop and a single room above. They date from 1687, having been raised upon the site of a certain "Long Shoppe" which the parishioners obtained license so long ago as 1401 to erect in front of their church.[1]

South of Cheapside the City was in flames, and far distant as the river stores and cellars along its bank continued burning, that day, and the morrow, and for days afterwards. Add to this other bodies of fire almost as large, advancing west and north with extraordinary

[1] On the back wall of the houses, raised high, is a stone tablet, which those who climb may read as follows:—

Erected at ye sole cost and charges
of the parish of St. Peter's Cheape
AoDni 1687.

William Howard,
Jeremiah Taverner
Churchwardens.

rapidity, a fierce roar accompanying their onrush, and one may begin to understand the appalling condition of London on the third day that it burnt—the third and greatest day of the Fire; the mass of the Fire, treble as great as had been seen in the daylight hours of Monday, ten times as great as when the sun went down on Sunday on a city which had been roused to a state of feverish alarm, but not yet to despair. The heat, even far out on the Thames, became insupportable. Myriads of live sparks whirled in the hot air currents, and descending on dry buildings, lighted innumerable separate fires, until the one great conflagration known as the Fire of London, which it has been possible hitherto to follow in its progress, began to lose all tangible shape. The east wind, so terrible and persistent, blew harder than before. That day, on the coast, several Dutch sail were blown ashore between Deal and Walmer. It was the expiring effort of the storm before it died away to calm, and against flames driven by a raging wind, human effort could little avail.

The lighter debris carried up blackened the whole of the remaining town where it fell, laying over houses and gardens a mantle of soot and charred fragments; and these flying witnesses of the Fire spread across a wide belt of surrounding country. A correspondent of Viscount Conway at Kensington wrote that his walks and gardens were almost covered with the ashes of papers, linen, and pieces of ceiling and plasterwork blown thither by the tempest. "Had your lordship been at Kensington you would have thought—for five days together, for so long the Fire lasted—it had been Doomsday, and that the heavens themselves had been on fire; and the fearful

cries and howlings of undone people did much increase the resemblance. The loss is inestimable. I believe there was never any such desolation by fire since the destruction of Jerusalem, nor will be till the last and general conflagration."

Lady Carteret told Pepys that an abundance of pieces of burnt paper were driven by the wind as far as Cranbourne, in Windsor Great Park. Among others, she took up one printed scrap whereon remained no more than the significant words, "Time is it is done." Out even to Henley and Beaconsfield little pieces of scorched silk and paper were deposited.

The King that day directed a warrant to issue for removing the Exchequer into Surrey, at Nonsuch. The Queen-Mother, anxious for her safety at Somerset House, arranged to leave at six o'clock next morning up-river for Hampton Court. Here, in the Strand, in the privacy of her apartments, the Queen-Mother was able to worship in her faith within one of the few Catholic chapels permitted in that time of persecution; and a Spanish co-religionist, with a fervour that outstrips his accuracy, has described how the God of Hosts sheltered the place. "At this very point (says he) the onrush of the flames was suspended: and it is clear and certain that in this way the Almighty (who is Lord of all the elements) wished to rebuke the blindness of the heretics, and to show in what respect he held the sovereign Sacrament of the Altar. A hundred and forty churches of the heretics, including St. Paul's, were destroyed in the flames, but at the sight of a Catholic temple the fire acknowledged itself to be conquered. Fifty and five thousand houses were left

in ruins; it was only at the sight of one of them, one that contained within its walls sanctified memories and the worship of our holy faith, that the flaming tempest, which involved so many in the disaster, allowed itself to be subdued."[1]

The dread spread from the Palace to the most humble tenement. Overnight the Duke of York, alive to the extreme urgency, had despatched orders to the deputy-lieutenants and justices of the peace of the adjoining counties, requiring them to summon workmen with tools to be in London by break of day. In some churches and public buildings were great hooks for pulling down houses; these were to be brought up with haste, it having already been found that the only means of stopping the Fire was to afford it no further fuel. Lord Belasyse sent to St. Bride's for ladders, ropes, and axes. The churchwardens of St. Margaret's, Westminster, not having tools available, advanced £11 on Lord Arlington's warrant for the purchase in the parish of pickaxes and other necessaries. The stocks of ironmongers' shops were largely commandeered. One Starkey, otherwise unknown to fame, did exemplary service by providing thirteen dozen pails and sixty brooms in an emergency, "which was the means, under God, of stopping the fire at that place."

While Mercers Chapel and the adjacent stone buildings offered a substantial obstruction to the Fire, the flames, searching the courts and passages north of the Poultry, at the head of Conyhope Alley broke upon Grocers Hall. Four walls stood amid ruins. The Grocers (formerly

[1] *Relacion Nueva y Verdadera del formidable incendio que ha sucedido en la ciudad de Londres.* Valencia, 1666.

Pepperers) constituted one of the most important gilds. In the Pipe Rolls the Gilda Pipariorum is mentioned as early as 1180. They were rich enough in 1411 to acquire a permanent home, which first was the chapel, and afterwards the entire mansion, belonging to the FitzWalter family, hereditary Standard Bearers of the City. The great Hall burnt in the Fire was erected in 1427.

A single turret in the grounds, probably a remnant of the old FitzWalter mansion, survived intact amid blackened walls and smoking piles of debris. Luckily the Company's records and muniments had been deposited in this turret. Every other particle of property was destroyed. The Court met in November to receive a report from the Wardens "of the Company's plate melted in the Hall in the late violent and destructive fire, and of the melted parcels taken up and put together," and ordered that the fused silver metal, 200 lbs. in weight, should be sold to the best advantage. Grocers Hall had intimate association with the Civil War, for when Parliament had been adjourned by force, the Grand Committee of Safety appointed to watch over the interests of the nation met there to hasten business for the advance of the armies.

Away on the Fire's northern edge Merchant Taylors Hall burnt, only the direction of the wind saving it from complete destruction. The Taylors had acquired the lands and house of Edmund Crepin, situate behind Threadneedle Street, in 1331; and recent excavations and repairs, disclosing the original masonry, have established the most interesting fact that it is the mediæval Hall which still stands, built in the latter half of the fourteenth century. The kitchen and crypt escaped with no serious

damage, but the flames necessitated large reparation of the Hall. It becomes impossible to accept without just suspicion the statement of a Commonwealth MS., that at a City feast held under the roof rafters of Merchant Taylors Hall one thousand guests dined together, with an additional three hundred in an adjoining apartment. It is curious to know that so late as 1646 the Hall floor was of earth strewn with rushes, and at that time, being found "inconvenient and oftentimes noisome," it was first paved with red tiles. North was an open garden. The Taylors almshouses on Threadneedle Street were only partially burnt. St. Martin Outwich Church, but a few paces distant, was unharmed.

All the Company's charters, account books dating from 1399, ancient deeds and much else, are preserved; they were removed to the Master's house in Seething Lane. But there was evil disaster in the Treasury, which was wholly consumed, with all its precious contents. What quantity of plate belonging to this rich Company perished, choice pieces of Elizabethan and Stuart craftsmanship, may be judged from two entries of receipts after the Fire: £286 1*s.* for the fused silver recovered from the debris, and a subsequent £4 19*s.* for more silver found "in the dust."

The mediæval foundation of St. Anthony's Hospital had stood at the corner where Broad Street turns from Threadneedle Street, possessing the curious franchise that its pigs were licensed rovers of the old City while other swine were kept within bounds; "'Tanthony's pigs," carrying their tinkling bells, and keeping friendly relations with all who fed them, were as familiar as were

the people. The chapel and sacristy of the brothers, surviving the Suppression, had been granted by the Dean and Canons of Windsor in Edward VI's reign to the French congregation, and became their mother church in England. It burnt, with all the houses round about, till the flames, still advancing north, reached out across Throgmorton Street and ignited Drapers Hall.

The Drapers Company, hastily seeking a place of safety for their valuables, concealed their plate in the mouth, or well, of a common sewer running beneath their gardens, and afterwards recovered it intact. The records were also removed. But no human skill could save the Hall from the fierce assault of the Fire.

Already I have indicated the historical interest of this great mansion, which had been built by Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, Wolsey's pupil in statecraft, and his successor in the perilous favour of King Henry VIII. It is described in detail in a deed of the time of purchase in 1541 from the Crown. A turret gate gave admission to the paved courtyard, surrounded by the domestic buildings, and with a winding stair in one angle. An open gallery looked over; near by was the ladies' chamber. The principal structure was the great Hall, which filled one side of the courtyard, and had two bay windows and clerestory lights, and a dark chamber with lattice windows from which guests could gaze down upon the revelry within. This was a type of the luxurious Tudor house in London, rivalled by none in its magnificence.

Nothing of it withstood the flames of 1666. When the Court reassembled on the 10th September, the piled-up debris being scarcely cold, they recorded in minutes "that

the Hall, parlour, and other buildings belonging thereto was all consumed to ashes by the late lamentable and dismal fire." The Renter Warden had the ill-fortune to overlook £446 left in a cupboard of the treasury, and the coin was partly fused by the fire and the rest defaced. It realized when sold only the refining value of the metal.

The Drapers' gardens were on a scale generously proportionate to the magnificence of their buildings, and how laid out by Cromwell, John Stow has told—

This house being finished, and having some reasonable plot of ground left for a garden, he (Cromwell) caused the pales of the gardens adjoining to the north part thereof, on a sudden to be taken down; twenty-two feet to be measured forth right into the north of every man's ground; a line there to be drawn, a trench to be cast, a foundation laid, and a high brick wall to be built. My father had a garden there, and a house standing close to his south pale; this house they loosed from the ground, and bare upon rollers into my father's garden twenty-two feet, ere my father heard thereof; no warning was given him, nor other answer, when he spake to the surveyors of that work, but that their master, Sir Thomas, commanded them so to do. No man durst go to argue the matter, but each man lost his land, and my father paid his whole rent, which was 6*s.* 6*d.* the year, for that half that was left.

Unconscionable as such dealing was, Cromwell's greed served London well. The gardens so enlarged proved a turning point in the Fire. The flames swept west, where there were houses to afford fresh fuel.

The Fire burnt round the Dutch church at Austin Friars, threatening imminent destruction. The great preaching nave of the friars stands to-day, the largest and almost the sole relic of the majestic buildings with which the four chief Mendicant Orders enriched London;[1] and near by the little church of St. Peter-le-Poore also escaped, to stand till 1788, mean in condition, built out beyond the houses and obstructing the way, "bearing the appearance of a tavern rather than a place of worship, with its clock hung out in the centre of the street, like the sign of a country inn." In their onrush west the flames consumed St. Margaret Lothbury, leaving nothing save an empty shell, and curiously a single chantry chapel, which survived uninjured, to be afterwards used as a vestry.

Founders Hall, a Tudor building erected at the head of a narrow alley from Lothbury in the troubled early years of the Reformation, was wholly consumed, and all the lands and tenements and many of the movables, books and papers belonging to the Company, with many merchants' houses near by. Amid the ruins left by the Fire one block stood intact. We learn of "the new buildings in Lothbury" being isolated and saved by the efforts of workmen, incited by a reward of £100 which was paid to them. At Pie Corner, where later in the day the Fire was stayed, they had £50. But such gifts were not always made. Alderman Sir Richard Browne had a chest with about £10,000 in it taken out of the fire, for

[1] A tiny fourteenth-century crypt of the Carmelite Priory is preserved under Brittons Court, Whitefriars, but there is not a stone in place to recall the sumptuous buildings of the Dominicans in Blackfriars, nor the Grey Friars' house in Newgate Street.

which service he gave the men who ventured their lives £4. Pepys, dining the following Saturday with Sir William Batten and a great company of neighbours, had "much good discourse; amongst others of the low spirits of some rich men in the City, in sparing any encouragement to the poor people that wrought for the saving their houses. Among others Alderman Starling, a very rich man, without children, the fire at next door to him in our lane, after our men had saved his house, did give 2*s.* 6*d.* among thirty of them, and did quarrel with some that would remove the rubbish out of the way of the fire, saying that they came to steal. Sir W. Coventry told me of another this morning in Holborn, which he showed the King: that when it was offered to stop the fire near his house for such a reward that came to 2*s.* 6*d.* a man among the neighbours, he would give but 18*d.*"

Tongues of flame above the house roofs and tall wreaths of smoke ascending still higher bent with the wind. The fires joined up in one roaring conflagration, pressing onward with ever-increasing noise. Could you, standing in burning Cheapside, have looked into any of the streets running north, the same picture would have presented itself. The Fire overtook one after another in its irresistible advance. This was one of the most closely built areas in London, timber houses, their projecting upper storeys almost touching over cobbled alleys or mere footpassages, being massed together right up to the City Wall, through which the dwellers in the honeycomb found exit into Moorfields and the Artillery Fields by Moorgate and Little Moorgate, and the postern nigh Cripplegate. These were houses in which substantial merchants lived

and traded, stocked with the goods of the world, it being then a favourite merchants' quarter, as it remains to-day. Guildhall lay in the midst of the mass, and about it stood half a dozen or more of the Companies' Halls.

An advanced fire-post had been pushed out in Coleman Street, where Sir John Harmor and Colonel Fitzgerald attended, with soldiers and constables assisting. They were driven back helplessly, the Fire advancing from Lothbury engulfing the buildings, too great in magnitude by far to be stopped there, or even checked. The menacing torrent of flame was soon astride the lower end of the street, St. Stephen's Church being ablaze; then, augmented by flames which came up from Old Jewry and the back of Mercers Chapel, broke furiously upon Guildhall, where for many hours raged the fiercest fire seen in the City's central area.

In 1666 Guildhall had no spacious square before it. The home of civic government was choked on all sides with buildings. "Fair and large," so Stow tells, St. Laurence Jewry occupied its present site. In this famous church Sir Thomas More in early manhood had delivered lectures to which resorted all the learned men of the City. A painting of the martyrdom of St. Laurence, saved out of the old church when the Fire burnt through it, hangs to-day in the vestry. Blackwell Hall, the cloth market, was opposite, and between the two a narrow passage-way afforded access to a small courtyard, upon which Guildhall and the Guildhall Chapel opened. Guildhall Yard had another claim to memory, for squeezed tightly in was a famous City tavern destroyed in the Fire, the Triple Tun, commemorated in Herrick's lines to Ben Jonson:

Ah Ben!
Say how or when
Shall we, thy guests
Meet at those lyrick feasts
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tunne;
Where we such clusters had
As made us nobly wild, not mad!
And yet each verse of thine
Outdid the meat, outdid the frolic wine.

Much of the ancient Guildhall has survived the Great Fire of London. The crypt, now thrown open to the public, and the great thickness of the walls, seen where windows pierce them, indicate the massive character of this stone structure. The Fire consumed everything above the stone floor save the actual walls; it destroyed the gallery and burst through windows and through the high-pitched roof. Gog and Magog, the City giants, burnt with the rest.[1] All that night Guildhall was raised up above the blazing city, a wonderful apparition. It appeared to Vincent "a fearful spectacle, which stood the whole body of it together in view, for several hours together, after the fire had taken it, without flames (I suppose because the timber was such solid oak) in a bright shining coal, as if it had been a palace of gold, or a great building of burnished brass."

[1] Thomas Jordan, the City Poet, who prepared the Mayoral Pageant in 1672, speaks of his wondrous new Giants, which after the show "are to be set up in Guildhall. I hope never to be demolished by such dismal violence as happened to their predecessors"—the "dismal violence" being their destruction in the Great Fire. See also *Repertory* 77, fo. 268. The Giants now at Guildhall were carved by Captain Richard Saunders in 1707.

The mediæval walls withstood the test, and they stand to-day, like native rock laved by the flames. Even part of the great oaken roof, which Vincent so picturesquely describes in the height of the Fire, kept its place in charred embers still spanning the wide hall. Wren afterwards, in the costly reconstruction of Guildhall which the Corporation undertook, raised the walls and roof twenty feet, and the new masonry still shows in contrast with the fire-marked stones below. Part of the floor, above the western crypt, was crushed in, and to-day is upheld by brick arches.

Guildhall, so richly stored with knowledge of the past, has no record of London in the Fire. It can tell you, indeed, more of London in four days of Wat Tyler's Rebellion than of those four September days in 1666 when the City burnt. It is uncertain how its precious documents were themselves preserved, but to the skilled masons, unknown and unhonoured, who laid the courses of the vaults so well and truly, there is owing something we can never repay. Little do Londoners realize the debt. We owe to them the history of London. Nothing less than its irreparable loss would have resulted had the City records been consumed, for none of them had been transcribed. John Stow, most painstaking of antiquaries, had looked into a few—and but a few. No transcript had then been made of the *Liber Albus*, the City's White Book, whereon that famous Mayor, Richard Whittington, and John Carpenter, his clerk, had laboured in the early years of the fifteenth century to compile a volume of the City's laws and precedents out of the documents they found scattered and without order; of the *Liber Horn* and

similar early records; of the four thousand citizens' wills, dating back as early as 1226, and enrolled in the Court of Husting, which have been made available for study by the industry and scholarship of Dr. Reginald Sharpe; of the so-called Letter Books, which in the same hands have provided historians with a vivid and detailed picture of mediæval City life; of the Coroners' Rolls and much besides. London to-day possesses the most complete series of historical records of any capital in the world. Had the Great Fire in 1666 burnt down underground at Guildhall the history of London could not have been written, for the material had in that event perished.

I think it is plain that the records were not taken away. Their bulk and weight alone almost forbade it. There is no entry of payment or reward for such service. I found, however, mention of "the booke howses." This cannot have been a library. Whittington had given books to Guildhall to found a library, but these in the reign of Edward VI the Protector Somerset had seized and never returned. Likely enough the reference is to the muniment rooms. The books in use and the historical records were in the custody of the Town Clerk, and would probably have been kept for safety in the vaults below his office. The fire raged through the offices and apartments, which were grouped about Guildhall with as much confusion as is the case to-day. The Council Chamber, the Lord Mayor's Court and parlour below, the Sheriff's Court, Town Clerk's offices, Hall-keeper's house—all afterwards required rebuilding. Three days after the Fire was out the Court of Aldermen ordered that the

records should be brought to Gresham House. They were fortunately intact.

The Basket Makers Company met at Guildhall, having no hall of its own. Its early history was lost in the Fire: the charter (if any), minute books, and documents all perished, and there survives only a transcript of the Acts and Orders, written in 1618, the apprentices' roll, commencing June, 1639, and a quarter book, commencing September, 1661. A brief entry in the Company's existing books dated the 10th January, 1667, tells that their room and "their chest, with carpets, cushions, silver spoons, books, writings, and other things standing in the same room at the time of the said fire were burnt, to the loss and detriment of the same brotherhood."

The Coopers Company, whose buildings lay immediately at the back of Guildhall, had appointed that day (Tuesday, Sept. 4) for a monthly Court. The flames were at hand; it was resolved that instead of attending to business all members should carry away to places of safety as much as possible of the writings, plate, linen, pewter and other of the Company's property, and it is owing to this wise and praiseworthy action that the records survive. A week later, being then homeless, the Court met at the Queen's Head Tavern in Bishopsgate. The Hall, timber-built, dated from the last years of King Henry VIII.

A line of fire ran down Basinghall Street till it reached London Wall, and there burnt itself out. The toppling houses, mere flaming tinder in the ungovernable heat, were flanked by three other Halls of City Companies, each built back from the thoroughfare, with its separate

court for approach. Masons Hall and Weavers Hall were entirely destroyed, and nothing survives to tell what manner of buildings they were. Girdlers Hall, a middle fifteenth-century structure, had been in John Stow's time "a very handsome building, with an open courtyard, and a garden behind it." The Fire forestalled only by a few years what must have been its inevitable fate, for in 1643 the hall had fallen into a ruinous condition and the Company had no money with which to repair; five years later they assessed its greatest value at £40 a year.

The whole length of Milk Street and Aldermanbury was outlined in flames, which pressed through the massed houses about Wood Street and Gutter Lane towards Aldersgate. Late that afternoon the City gate was itself environed in fire. St. Mary Aldermanbury was notable among London churches and of great age, built with a loft over the porch, and possessing a cloister. All was a ruin after the Fire. In the old fabric Milton married his second wife in 1656; but it is as a London link with Shakespeare that St. Mary Aldermanbury is most warmly cherished, for in the little graveyard about Wren's later church still lie the bones of the actors Heminge and Condell, who in veneration of Shakespeare's genius and memory first collected together and edited his plays.

Some part of Wood Street survived the flames, but the Sheriff's Compter there was destroyed. The old cellars of the neighbouring Mitre Tavern are to-day in use by wine-merchants, the Fire having passed harmlessly over them. The tavern burnt, a famous house in its day. Proctor, the landlord, "the greatest vintner for some time

in London for great entertainments," says Pepys, and his son had perished of Plague in the previous year.

Back from the street the fine Hall of the Haberdashers Company was yet another fifteenth-century building lost to London in the Great Fire. The old Hall became a Puritan centre in the City, and within its walls had been founded a flourishing Independent Church, wherein thundered William Strong, John Rowe, Theophilus Gale, Thomas Rowe, and Dr. Gibbon, all eminent divines. The Haberdashers, being rich, were bled in turn by the monarch and by Parliament, till the latter owed the Company £21,000—and never repaid it. Four treasured loving-cups of silver, one dating from 1629, are the chief salvage from the Great Fire, by which the Company suffered grievous loss both in the destruction of its home and of its rent-yielding property.

Above the flames of Wood Street's burning houses two steeples rose. St. Alban's Church stands to-day, rebuilt by Wren. St. Michael's, by Huggen Lane corner, contained one curious relic, a human head, said—on somewhat dubious authority—to be that of King James IV of Scotland, slain at Flodden Field. Stow relates that at the battle's close the body, wrapped in lead, was brought to the Monastery of Shene, in Surrey, where after the Dissolution it was thrown into a waste room among old timber and other rubbish, and he himself saw it.

Since the which time workmen there, for their foolish pleasure, hewed off his head; and Launcelot Young, master glazier to her Majesty, feeling a sweet savour to come from thence, and seeing the same dried from all

moisture, and yet the form remaining, with the hair of the head, and beard red, brought it to London to his house, in Wood Street, where for a time he kept it for the sweetness, but in the end caused the sexton of that church to bury it amongst other bones taken out of their charnel

—surely the strangest story that one may light upon in royal necrology.

The Fire was kept from Cripplegate for the time by blowing up houses with gunpowder. The expedient was first put into practice there and near The Tower. But nothing could check the immense wall of flame driven directly west by the wind, which quickly levelled with the ground the still disreputable quarter that had been allowed to grow up on the site of the dismantled sanctuary of St. Martin-le-Grand. Not a stone of the ancient church which had rung the Curfew for mediæval London was then standing. Saddlers Hall was overwhelmed; the Company rescued what remained to them of their plate, their burial pall, and a few of their books that were in use at the time, and therefore were easily accessible, all else being lost in a confused pile of bricks, iron and melted lead that strewed the ground.

Foster Lane was the headquarters of the working goldsmiths, who toiled at their trade in the many little shops upon this narrow way. The stone church of St. Vedast offered substantial obstruction to the Fire. Its ancient tower was allowed to stand when the new church was afterwards raised, but in 1694, on account of weakness, it had to come down, and Wren's graceful steeple takes its place. Set in the steeple, unique, I believe, in

London, is a clock without a face. All the works are there, and the mechanism raises the hammer of the bell which proclaims the hours, but there are no dials.

Outside the neighbouring St. Leonard's Church, a small thirteenth-century foundation, stood a monument to John Brokeitwell, who had restored or new built the fabric, bearing this quaint verse so quaintly spelt out—

> Al yat wil gud wurkes wurch
> Prey for yem yat help thys Church
> Geuyng almys: fur Cherite
> Paternoster and Ave.

Goldsmiths Hall, in Foster Lane, rebuilt only thirty years before, stood in the Fire's path. The Parliament Committee that sequestered the estates of the Royalists conducted its long proceedings there, and with bitter memories the now dominant party must have watched the flames burning through. "Faith to tell thee, Goldsmiths Hall is damnable rich; and informers will have the devil and all!" says an old play.[1] Sir Charles Doe, Master of the Company, acting with prompt decision, took to his house at Edmonton most of the plate, records and portable things of value, but the tables wherein the artificers' marks were struck and the books containing their names and addresses burnt, causing much confusion. Minutes of the Company convey some idea of the ruin wrought. Chimneys left tottering were in danger of falling if not secured; the Warden delivered to Sir Robert Vyner parcels of molten silver and some standard pieces, a new seal and small seal for the Company were ordered,

[1] Randolph, *Hey for Honesty*, 1651.

both having been destroyed in the Fire; in the winter the south wall fell down, breaking in the vault beneath.

Nothing withstood the fury of the Fire. The Wax-chandlers Company suffered the loss of their Hall in Gutter Lane, near by that of the Goldsmiths, which they had been at considerable expense in rebuilding only nine years before. Of Broderers Hall I know only that it perished, and with it most of the Company's records. Four churches were grouped together within a stone's throw, and all were consumed. St. John Zachary had been a favourite burial place of the goldsmiths, and within its walls were many monuments of Masters of that Company. A few stones remain. St. Mary Staining has left an open space of green churchyard to mark its site. Of St. Olave Silver Street, there is this and a further reminder, for in the wall is built a memorial stone, gruesomely decorated with a skull and crossbones, and bearing an inscription.

St. Anne and St. Agnes, which had been nearly destroyed by fire in 1548 and rebuilt, burnt just within Aldersgate. In Noble Street, close at hand, was the house built by Serjeant Fleet, Recorder of London in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and afterwards the residence of Robert Tichborne, Lord Mayor in 1657, who was subsequently tried and convicted of high treason. In the Great Fire, when all the houses about it were consumed, this one escaped its fury. Scriveners Hall burnt in the same street, and of its historical archives only a single folio volume, 1616–25, escaped destruction.

The flames burst through Aldersgate, but the gate itself suffered no great damage, and the Fire, being

hemmed in by the stout City wall to right and left, made little headway beyond. Only about thirty houses immediately outside the gate were burnt. St. Botolph Aldersgate was scorched by the flames, wind driven across the open churchyard, as repairs afterwards made indicate. Over the street, the Hall of the Worshipful Company of Cooks stood unharmed at the edge of the Fire.

Aldersgate was no older than King James I. The Scottish monarch, early after taking possession of the British throne, entered the City by this way, beneath the ancient gate, which was much dilapidated and even dangerous. Honour was paid to him when, in 1616, the gate was pulled down and rebuilt. Its chief adornment was a colossal equestrian figure of King James, in relief, over the central arch, surmounted by the quartered arms of England and Scotland, with figures of the Prophets in deep niches on the side towers. Beneath that of Jeremiah were inscribed the words (so truly prophetic) of his 17th chapter, 25th verse: "Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever."

Tuesday witnessed the flames which had been borne up from the river sweeping across the full length of Cheapside and along Newgate Street, and thence up to the northern Wall, till the whole City burnt from The Tower to Newgate. Dryden expresses in a sentence the extraordinary rapidity of the Fire's advance when he speaks of the flames "wading through the streets." And

far ahead of this great conflagration the Fire, devouring everything, still pressed forward along the Thames side into the Temple and up Fleet Street.

The personal service given by the King and the Duke of York on this day of London's tragedy cannot be too highly valued. Charles was not cast in the heroic mould, nor was his Royal brother of that stamp. The supreme peril of the capital brought out in both a display of courage well worthy of their kingly rank, and intensified the loyalty felt towards the monarch. Undoubtedly the ascendency which the King obtained, and the sublime good sense that he manifested, against every provocation to resort to vengeful measures, did much to calm the people when, after the Fire was out, they came to realize the full measure of their distress.

The King was in the City on horseback from early morning. He never left it that day. He rode from place to place, an escort of Guards with him, at times unattended save by a few gentlemen, seeing that orders to man the stations were executed, passing to the very edge at which the Fire was burning, and by word and example encouraging those who toiled amid the oppressive heat to pull down houses or to throw water on the flames. To do the King justice, he was insensible to peril. He carried a hundred gold guineas in a pouch swung from his shoulder, and with his own hand scattered the coins among the workmen as a reward and incentive to further effort. Laying regal dignity aside, the King alighted from his horse at some corner where falling buildings added to the common danger, and himself took

a share in the work, handling spade and bucket and inspiring the courtiers about him to do the same. Bespattered with mud and dirt, his laced costume dripping with water, his hot face blackened with the universal fire dust but himself alert and tireless—this was another monarch than he whom his people pictured dallying with his mistresses at Whitehall. The hour had brought out the man. Never in his reign did faith in Charles stand higher in the opinion of the London populace than in those desperate days of the Fire.

I brush aside the loyal panegyrists and versifiers, who were plentiful; the truth speaks out in private letters, written with no ulterior thought of ever pleasing the Royal eye. One Henry Griffith says in his letter from London to a relative at Shrewsbury: "Some went to stealing, others to look on, but all stood to the mercy of an enraged fire, which did in three days almost destroy the metropholist (*sic*) of this our Isle, had not God of his infinite mercy stayed the fury thereof, which was done by his Majesty's and the Duke of York's singular care and pains, handling the water in buckets when they stood up to the ankles in water, and playing the engines for many hours together, as they did at the Temple and Cripplegate, which people seeing, fell to work with effect, having so good fellow labourers."

Lord Conway's gossip wrote to him a few days after the Fire: "'Tis fit your lordship should know that all that is left, both of the City and suburbs, is acknowledged, under God, to be wholly due to the King and the Duke of York, who, when the citizens had abandoned all further care of the place, and were intent chiefly upon the preser-

vation of their goods, undertook the work themselves, and with incredible magnanimity rode up and down, giving orders for blowing up of houses with gunpowder, to make void spaces for the fire to die in, and standing still to see those orders executed, exposing their persons not only to the multitude, but to the very flames themselves, and the ruins of the buildings ready to fall upon them, and sometimes labouring with their own hands to give example to others: for which the people do now pay them, as they ought to do, all possible reverence and admiration."

The Duke of York has other testimony to his activities equally impartial and sincere. He won the hearts of the people by his indefatigable pains day and night in helping to quench the Fire, handling buckets of water with as much diligence as the poorest man that did assist, wrote John Rushworth, a citizen, with the stinging comment, "if the Lord Mayor had done as much, his example might have gone far towards saving the City." The gentleman attending the Duke of York, one Wind. Sandys, describes his long day spent in the burning streets, from five in the morning till eleven o'clock or midnight, "active and stirring in this business."

All orders signified nothing, says Sandys. "Had not the Duke been present, and forced all people to submit to his commands, by this time I am confident there had not been a house standing near Whitehall. The city [citizens] for the first rank they minded only for their own preservation; the middle sort so distracted and amazed that they did not know what they did; the poorer they minded nothing but pilfering; so the city was abandoned to the fire. The Duke, on Tuesday, about twelve

o'clock, was environed with fire; the wind high, blowed such great flakes, and so far, that they fired Salisbury Court and several of the houses between that and Bridewell Dock, so the Duke was forced to fly for it, and had almost been stifled with the heat."

Dockyardsmen from Woolwich and Deptford were sent in to strengthen the ranks of the soldiers and civilians, tired to exhaustion by their two days' efforts. None had before appeared; the inspiration was that of the versatile Pepys, and his immediate object the safety of the Navy Office in Seething Lane. A mere handful of seamen, numbering twenty-eight in all, had been employed since Sunday, and had done excellent work with ladders and fire-axes in bringing down houses. Lord Manchester, afterwards commending their good service, naturally made no mention of the fact that their advice had been totally disregarded. This was to use gunpowder in clearing a way before the flames, but it had been deemed too desperate a remedy, till on Tuesday, when more than one-half of the City within the Wall had been destroyed, the expedient was adopted, with entirely satisfactory results. The seamen's practice was to place a barrel full, or nearly full, of powder in each house of a row to be demolished, and ignite it by a train. The force of the explosion lifted each timber structure a yard or so; the straining frames broke, and the building collapsed flat on the ground where it had stood, with but trifling danger to bystanders. What little fire was caused by the flame was easily stamped out. Pepys bears testimony to the efficacy of the method, though "at first it did frighten the people more than anything else."

Forty more sailors were brought into the City from the Fleet.[1] The troops in the streets were increased. Nor were there wanting considerable numbers of men, lured by the high pay offered, to assist in moving goods and in endeavours to save houses. With the larger part of the City's populace, Tuesday was a day of panic helplessness. Fearful as it had been to be in London on Monday, the second day of the Fire, to those whose homes were in its vicinity, the conditions were now still more alarming. The hot air made breathing painful. Flames sped along with almost inconceivable rapidity, razing whole streets to the ground in two or three hours. New fires broke out at far distant points. The frightened people fled in a general *sauve qui peut*, saving property where possible, in any case life, and leaving vast quantities of goods and stocks to be burnt.

The magnitude of the disaster to London is but poorly expressed by the mere devastation of streets and numbers of burnt houses; the human element more nearly touches the imagination. In the 13,200 houses destroyed there cannot have dwelt fewer than one hundred thousand people, and to these were added in the flight thousands of others, whose sole anxiety was to seek safety when the flames were seen to be approaching their homes. The mere mass of such numbers is stupefying. A parade of one hundred thousand troops, drawn up compact in companies and battalions, occupies a great space—I doubt if the British Army before the European War has had such a parade. These people were marshalled in no sort of order, and consisted of those of all ages—men,

[1] *State Papers* (*Domestic*), 1666–7, p. 104.

women, and young children—the strong with the helpless, most of them loaded with personal belongings, and the entire disorderly rout interspersed with carts packed with goods, led horses similarly burdened, coaches and every kind of moving vehicle pressed into the service. They went out of the City under a single impulse, not knowing whither they were going, without lodging, without shelter, without food.

Such was the exit from burning London. The long hours dragged wearily in that slow and it might have seemed interminable procession, throughout two whole days and nights while the City emptied itself; yet the wonder is that in the time and conditions so much was accomplished.

It was no longer desirable, even had it been practicable, to keep the citizens in. The carts were readmitted, and the confusion within the City grew worse. The lines of refugees streaming towards the gates pressed on through the hot streets. The rich alone could secure a vehicle, and still many were disappointed. Half value of the goods saved was not considered too extortionate a charge for the use of a cart. Better pay half than leave the whole to the flames, the merchant reasoned, and paid the demand. Earlier in the Fire's progress a cart had been obtained for sums ranging from 10*s.* up to £5. As much as £40 and £50 was now the price, and even that was given; there is a recorded case of one wealthy householder paying £400 for his removal from the Fire. The City streets were more complicated in plan than a spider's web, and by every one the flying refugees spread outwards. With household treasures and furniture piled high, and

children seated uneasily on top, perhaps the mother with them, the cart rumbled noisily over the dreadful cobblestones; obstructed everywhere by other carts and people crowding to get away, turned aside by the soldiers, and at times brought to a dead stop where demolished houses lay in wreckage across the roadway, or great holes gaped in its surface where pipes had been cut for water.

The head of the family trudged alongside the horse, little caring whither he went, but anywhere to get out of the doomed city. He might count himself fortunate. There were many to whom the urgent call to save the sick meant leaving all their worldly possessions to the Fire. Women were seen weeping for their children, fearful that they might be trodden down in the press, or lost in the crowd of people, or exposed to the violence of the flames; husbands more solicitous for the safety of their wives and children than for their own; the soldiers brusquely clearing a way with their arms when there was more need to ply water buckets; tradesmen loading their backs.[1] The faces of all men appeared ghastly in the firelight.

In the throng came some poor woman, too ill to stand, borne recumbent on a mattress through the streets. An aged man was carried the same way. "They were bringing forth their wives (some from their childbed) and their little ones (some from their sick bed) out of their houses and sending them into the country or somewhere into the fields with their goods." The strong helped the faltering steps of the weak, a common purpose uniting all. The tragedy of it touched the sympathetic heart of

[1] Stillingfleet's *Sermon to the House of Commons*, 1666, Oct. 10.

Vincent, whose words I quote. "Scarcely a back either of man or woman that hath strength, but had a burden on it in the streets; it was very sad to see such throngs of poor citizens coming in, and going forth from the unburnt parts, heavy loaden with some pieces of their goods, but more heavy loaden with weighty grief and sorrow of heart, so that it is wonderful they did not quite sink under their burdens."

They left a city which seemed plainly doomed to annihilation. The flames roared in the wind, and to the sights and sounds of these awful hours was added the sharp crack of powder explosions, followed by the rattle and thud with which a shattered house fell to the ground. Those who looked back into the red heart of the Fire saw houses wreathed in flame and swaying, then toppling headlong into the roadway. The Fire sent up huge volumes of smoke as from some Titan's furnace, streaked with flying sparks. A feature for amazement was the great smoke arch which spanned the heavens, extending from burning London to the western horizon, a sulphurous rainbow, symbol of wrath rather than peace; and through it the sun shone red, and yet so dimly that it might be looked at with the naked eye, yielding a fainter light than in an eclipse.

The feverish excitement of the flight was attended with new terrors; a false alarm, born of coward fears of attack by French and Dutch, and passing with lightning speed from group to group. "They believed that all the French in the town (which, no doubt, were a very great number) were drawn into a body, to prosecute those by the sword who were preserved by the fire; and the inhabitants of a

whole street would run in a great tumult one way, upon the rumour that the French were marching at the other end of it, so terrified men were with their own apprehensions." [1] At times a new fire broke out ahead of the people, sending them scattering to find another way of escape. Their haste was quickened by a yet more dreadful peril; report spread (born, no doubt, of the noise of frequent explosions) that the Tower of London was firing its cannon into the flames to reduce the whole City, or at least to lay low all the houses about the fortress, and so isolate it. Those who dwelt on the high roads near London at night as they lay in bed heard the carts continually rumbling and posting by.

Away at Enfield after dark the Fire was plainly visible Even so far distant from London people as they passed along were heard calling out, "Forty pounds for a cart!" and "Any money for a cart!" to carry their goods. The light in the sky from burning London was seen at night above forty miles round about.

"As they ran they made a heart-rending murmur; one would need to have been a Nero to have watched such a spectacle without pity," says a foreign observer, describing the flight out of the London streets.

Necessity sharpened men's wits. There was the man whom Vincent saw with great energy rolling a cask of oil towards the City gates. Was it oil? One questions whether the top had not been broached for storing more valuable contents, and a form of rolling carriage thus devised older, one imagines, than the axle and wheel.

[1] Lord Clarendon's *Life*.

The exodus spread far. A stranger approaching London might have imagined there was before him a city which had been sacked by some conqueror and left burning. For miles around the ground was strewn with movables of all kinds, which the citizens in their flight had saved from the Fire. Moorfields and Finsbury Fields had the largest aggregation, but the rough camp spread out to Islington and Highgate on the north, to St. Giles's Fields and Soho Fields on the west. Away from the City the people still felt the intolerable heat and dry sharpness of the air, as if they had been in the area of the Fire. Those who had crossed the river in boats took refuge in St. George's Fields, whence they watched London burning. A few refugees found house room with the country people, others sought shelter in miserable huts and hovels, but the greater number—men, women, and children—lay down beside their household goods to snatch what rest they could get under the stars. Fortunately the weather remained dry and warm. "Many without a rag (says Evelyn) or any necessary utensils, bed or board, who from delicateness, riches, and easy accommodation in stately and well-furnished houses were now reduced to the extremest misery and poverty."

Dryden, though himself absent from London when disaster overwhelmed it, has in the *Annus Mirabilis* written the only poetry of value that the Fire inspired—

> Night came, but without darkness nor repose,
> A dismal picture of the general doom;
> Where souls, distracted, when the trumpet blows,
> And half unready with their bodies come.

Those who have homes, when home they do repair
To a last lodging call their wandering friends:
Their short uneasy sleeps are broke with care,
To look how near their own destruction tends:

Those who have none sit round where once it was,
And with full eyes each wonted room require,
Haunting the yet warm ashes of the place,
As murdered men walk where they did expire.

Some stir up coals and watch the vestal fire,
Others in vain from sight of ruin run.
And, while through burning labyrinths they retire,
With loathing eye repeat what they would shun.

The most in fields like herded beasts lie down,
To dews obnoxious on the grassy floor;
And while their babes in sleep their sorrows drown,
Sad parents watch the remnants of their store.

The suburbs, in every place thought to be beyond reach of the flames, were littered in like manner. Goods were heaped in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in Gray's Inn Fields and Hatton Garden, where companies of the Trained Bands were stationed to guard them, by the King's order. The open piazza of Covent Garden also did service for storage. Many of the rectors, forestalling the order contained in a Royal Proclamation of Wednesday, threw open their churches and schools for use as storehouses in the time of common calamity. Public buildings were also utilized. Pepys complained querulously that he could not find any shop in Westminster Hall at which to buy a shirt or pair of gloves, the place being stacked with people's goods.

Wild scenes took place in the burning City. Many of

the lowest classes, having themselves nothing to lose, or whose little possessions were already lost, hovered about the outskirts of the Fire pilfering and stealing, always ready to attack any hapless foreigner who might come along. The flames drove from their homes many Dutchmen and Frenchmen who had found it advisable to keep concealed. At sight of them there was a hue and cry, and far too often a stern chase ended in savage brutality. English contemporary writers say little about the street disorders. Clarendon records only that in the excitement of the populace many foreigners were sorely beaten and bruised. But there are stories in these foreigners' letters one would wish not to believe, of men being hanged on signposts and afterwards cut down—hanged, one must suppose, by the frenzied mob, and cut down in time by the soldiers who were in the streets to preserve order. A number of foreigners, escaping the clutches of these wretches, found refuge in the house at Chelsea of the Count de Molena, the Spanish representative at King Charles's Court. It is to the credit of the Catholic Ambassador's humanity that Protestant Dutchmen and Catholic Frenchmen were alike given sanctuary in this hour of their dire need.

Clarendon has expressed surprise that in the general rage of the people no foreigner was assassinated outright. The magistrates cast numbers of foreign residents into prison, ostensibly on suspicion of crime, actually to keep them from the blind fury of the populace; all were afterwards liberated. The outlying gaols were filled during the Great Fire. It would be false to suggest that only the brutish and illiterate element shared in the persecu-

tions. That the fire came from the Lord out of Heaven was believed by some, but while London burnt it was the firm conviction of a large part of the populace that this was the hellish business of secret enemies in their midst—Frenchmen, Dutchmen and Papists—who even then were casting fireballs about to spread the conflagration still farther. A single instance may illustrate how easily the street mob was misled.

When the Fire this Tuesday afternoon was threatening Newgate Market, Lord Hollis and Lord Ashley had their station there. Near them an excited group collected, and a man was pushed out, without hat or cloak, being roughly used by his captors. The two lords recognized him as a servant of the Portuguese Ambassador. A substantial citizen was ready to take oath that he had seen this man put his hand in his pocket and throw a fireball into a shop; immediately thereafter the house was in flames. He cried to the people to stop the man, and made haste in pursuit himself, but the villain was already taken. The people had as a first precaution seized his sword, which he was ready to draw. He did not comprehend a word of English. His pockets were searched for fireballs, but no more were found.

Lord Hollis, interpreting to the breathless and speechless man, explained the accusation. The foreigner denied that he had put his hand into his pocket; but he remembered very well that as he walked he saw a piece of bread upon the ground. Taking it up, he had laid the bread upon a ledge in the next house. This was a custom, or superstition, among the Portuguese, so natural with them that if the King of Portugal were walking, and saw a

piece of bread upon the ground, he would take it up with his own hand and keep it until he saw a place upon which to rest it.

That was, in fact, all that had happened—that, and no more. The lords and many of the people walked to the house, which was in view. There they found a piece of bread, just within the door upon a board, where the Portuguese had said he had placed it. Two doors off a house was burning—not this one. The excited citizen on the opposite side of the way, seeing the foreigner with his hand within the door, and immediately after fire breaking out, concluded that the flames were in the same house.

CHAPTER VII

BURNING OF OLD ST. PAUL'S

THE Fire by Thames-side swept on from Baynard's Castle till it reached the Fleet River, then raged through the Blackfriars Precinct. A single topographical feature remains. You may pace to-day the eastern cloister walk, where black-cowled friars paced up and down centuries ago, when the most splendid convent in London covered all this land, and was a centre of religious life the influence of which spread far. Church Entry, going north into Carter Lane, follows exactly the line of the cloister walk and the passage that divided the preaching nave and choir of the conventual church. The Great Fire of London, completing the spoliation begun by Henry VIII, has left nothing else.

Queen Mary found the Priory Church already brought down; it had been a noble structure, comparable with the existing Southwark Cathedral by London Bridge. The friars' Guest House, left standing a century after their dispossession, had passed into the hands of the Apothecaries Company in 1632, and when the Fire of London destroyed it the Company built their present Hall on the site. John Bill, the King's printer, had set up his press where to-day *The Times* is produced, and there he printed the Royal Proclamations till the Fire. The King's Printing

House burnt in the flames of 1666. Close by the *London Gazette* was issued. There is another imperishable memory of Blackfriars. The friars' upper frater, known as the Parliament Chamber, and made famous as the scene of Queen Catherine's trial before the Papal Legates, afterwards became Burbage's Blackfriars Theatre. It is, perhaps, little known that that tragedy in a Queen's life was repeated in mimic drama within the very same walls when Shakespeare's *King Henry VIII* was played there. The last remnants of the abandoned Blackfriars Theatre disappeared in 1655 to make room for tenements.

Noblemen, after the spoliation, had chosen the site of the Dominican Priory, so finely situated overlooking the Thames, for their town dwellings, and probably few of the claustral buildings remained above ground when the Great Fire spread into Blackfriars. Lord Cobham entertained Queen Elizabeth at his mansion in Blackfriars. Lord Hunsdon, the great Queen's Lord Chamberlain, had a house there; afterwards so tragically known for the "Fatal Vespers" of the 26th October, 1623, when Father Drury and ninety-four Catholics, secretly assembled for worship, perished by the collapse of a floor. The Earl and Countess of Somerset (1615) and Lord Aubigny were other residents. But more noteworthy is the association with Blackfriars of Sir Anthony Vandyck. The great painter, when he came to settle in England, was given a house there by King Charles I, and he died in it in 1641, being buried in Old St. Paul's, but the Civil Wars prevented a monument being raised. The house had no doubt been left standing with others of the great

residences, after fashion turned its back upon Blackfriars and streamed west.

St. Anne's Church, built for the parish after the destruction of the Dominican house, also perished, and only a bare plot of paved churchyard survives.

Near the water by Puddle Dock the King's Wardrobe was still kept. Lord Sandwich, Master of the Wardrobe, had an official residence there; and Pepys, set down one Lord's Day by his boatman, "went up to Jane Shore's tower, and there W. Howe and I sang." Cromwell's soldiers will have spared little of such emblems of royalty as they found, but the greater despoiler was King James I, upon whose memory may maledictions fall. "In this place," says the worthy Fuller, "were kept the ancient clothes of our English Kings, which they wore on great festivals, so that this Wardrobe was in effect a Library for Antiquaries, therein to read the mode and fashion of all ages. These King James in the beginning of his reign gave to the Earl of Dunbar, by whom they were sold, re-sold, and re-re-sold at as many hands almost as Briareus had, some gaining vast estates thereby." Wren's red-brick church of St. Andrew-in-the-Wardrobe was built where the earlier church stood till 1666.

Shakespearean associations linger about Blackfriars; there was the theatre; and Baynard's Castle; and close at hand, where Ireland Yard emerges into St. Andrew's Hill, stood the only piece of property that Shakespeare is known to have possessed in London. "I gyve, will, bequeath, and devise to my daughter Susannah Hall . . . all that messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances, wherein one John Robinson dwelleth, scituat, lying, and

being in the Blackfriars in London, nere the Wardrobe"—so the will reads. Distant scarcely one hundred yards, in Carter Lane, the Bell Inn perished in the Great Fire. From this tavern, in 1598, Richard Quyney directed a letter "To my loveing good ffrend and contreymann Mr. Wm. Shackespere deliver thees," the only letter addressed to the poet that is known to exist. The original is at Stratford-on-Avon.

Blackfriars was alight many hours before the Fire threatened St. Paul's, and the flames, driven by the wind along Carter Lane and Creed Lane, gained the crest of the rising ground. Ludgate lay astride the street where the hill rose steeply from the little Fleet River. Like other gates in the City Wall, this served the double purpose of gateway and debtor's prison. King John's gate had been rebuilt in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and its single arch measured the width of the street passing through. Ludgate Hill had not attained the importance as a trading centre that it enjoyed later, when the mercers, driven from Paternoster Row by the Fire, came to settle there. It was steeper than as we know it to-day, and narrow. St. Martin's Church, with its stone tower, stood far out into what is now the roadway, and afterwards Wren, clearing the ground for his new foundations, came upon a Roman sepulchral stone bearing the figure of a soldier, one hand grasping a sword. The touching inscription is read over the centuries: "To the Departed Spirits. To Vivius Marcianus, soldier of the Second Augustan Legion, Januaria Martina, his dutiful wife, raised this memorial."

Northward the City Wall extended in a straight line to Newgate, with the Old Bailey below. The grave

peril in which the entire western Liberty would lie had been foreseen if once the Fire, driven across London from the Bridge, should reach the high ground crowned by St. Paul's, and burn amidst the buildings and alleys that crowded about the Cathedral's extensive precinct. Early as Monday morning, when the Council was sitting at Ely lace, it had been proposed that the wharves and sheds about the Fleet's navigable way should be cleared and the houses on both sides pulled down, so as to make a broad open lane against the Fire from the Thames to Holborn Bridge. None, however, could comprehend that the flames should extend so far. The hopes entertained that day of setting limits to them had on Tuesday given way to despair, there being little expectation of saving anything except this western portion of the town, for which a supreme effort was made. In feverish haste soldiers and civilians, all who, by commands, threats or bribes, had been persuaded to stay and give their aid, were employed in clearing a passage along the Fleet River, that should leave nothing to afford fuel for the Fire.

The same tragic thing happened that had been repeated in so many parts of London. The Fire having mastered the neighbourhood about St. Paul's, a wave of flame rose menacingly at the crest of the hill, leaping high where the Sessions House was a blazing ruin. The wind, driving through it, carried live brands and sparks high above the heads of the labourers engaged in levelling the houses about Fleet Bridge, setting buildings alight across the Fleet, and causing fires as far distant as Salisbury Court. Then breaking the bounds set by Ludgate and the City Wall, the mass of Fire advanced with bewilder-

ing speed, licked up the dry timber houses, and as an onlooker has described, rushed like a torrent down Ludgate Hill. The labourers fell back before the scorching heat; their whole day's effort was in vain. By five o'clock that afternoon Fleet Street was alight as far as the Conduit, which stood out in the roadway before Shoe Lane, and by six the flames were at the wall of the Temple. At that hour the writer whose letter I have so often quoted left the Fire spreading, with a postscript as he looked back: "Despairing then of ever seeing this place more but in ashes, we went to Hornsey, four miles off, and in our way at Highgate we might discern with what rage and greediness it marched up Fleet Street."

Still over burning London St. Paul's, the highest, greatest, most conspicuous building of all, stood unharmed, while the Fire raged about it. Dean Colet's famous school (the number of its one hundred and fifty-three foundation scholars is supposed to be the number of the miraculous draught of fishes) was aflame by the Cathedral's eastern end. The ancient bust of Colet, now at Hammersmith, is the only relic saved. The Fire consumed the school library, with all Colet's printed books and manuscripts of grammatical learning in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and on divinity. Samuel Cromleholme, the High Master, lost all his household stuff, and what hurt more deeply, his personal library, which was reputed to be the best private collection of books in London in his day. There were many rare impressions from the presses of Aldus, Junta, Grafton, Estienne, Elzevir and others, all burnt to ashes. "The loss of these books," says a writer mourning Cromleholme's death in 1672,

"I verily believe shortened his days, for he was a great lover of his books, and spared no cost in procuring them from all parts of Europe."

It is an old legend of the Cathedral, no doubt recalled at this hour, that always a wind blows at the Dean's corner, south-west of the Churchyard; the devil raised it by his hasty flight after St. Dunstan, the goldsmiths' patron, had tweaked his nose with his red-hot pincers. Another version is that the devil was riding on the wind to Doctors Commons, and dismounting left the wind to await him at Dean's Court. He found the lawyers' company so congenial that the wind is waiting there still. The Dean's house burnt, affording Sancroft opportunity for erecting the pretty house that stands to-day, though shorn of much of its pleasant garden laid out towards the river. The statement that appears in so many works on London and St. Paul's, that the Bishop's house to the north-west (site marked by London House Yard) was also destroyed in the Great Fire, is incorrect; other despoilers had come before, and there was none left to destroy.

Lord Burgavenny had a mansion by Amen Corner, which the Stationers Company, incorporated in the previous century, had acquired, adding to it their Hall, built "in a large timber frame." The site is held by the Company to-day; but of Lord Burgavenny's house nothing survived the Fire. The loss to the Company was very great. They had undertaken the printing of books. Not only were their buildings consumed, but also the presses and large quantities of printed volumes stored in their warehouses and in the nave of Christ

Church. Happily for our knowledge of English printed books, the Stationers' registers were saved.

Where to-day the houses of the residentiary Canons of St. Paul's stand in quiet seclusion at Amen Corner was the Royal College of Physicians, Lineacre's foundation. The College had been robbed and ransacked when locked up during the previous year's Great Plague, and now was completely destroyed in the Fire, with its contents. The premises, acquired early that century, had been enlarged by the eminent Harvey, who in 1653 built a library and museum. As the flames approached, Dr. Merritt, the Harveian librarian and custos, removed to a place of safety the charters and annals, the case of surgical instruments, and the President's insignia, which still are treasured possessions of the College. The portraits of Dr. Harvey and Dr. Fox were cut from their frames and so secured. About one hundred and forty printed books from the library were all that were saved.

Mean dwellings built close against the Cathedral walls had disappeared under Laud's reforming hand, and about St. Paul's the Churchyard made a considerable open space. It seemed to the citizens a place of comparative safety. Long before the flames came round into Paternoster Row and searched the neighbouring lanes and alleys, the mercers and stationers and booksellers, whose shops elbowed one another in this vicinity, carried their goods into the church itself, and heaped other merchandise in the open Churchyard, hoping that it would there be isolated—large quantities of heavy cloth especially, and the lighter fabrics of fashionable wear. Much more

went into a great strong room which it was believed no fire could force.

St. Faith under Paul's was actually in the vaults—odd place for a parish church—a four-aisled crypt beneath the choir, ceiled with stout arches. The Cathedral floor which served for worshippers above formed also a roof for worshippers below. This was the church of the Stationers Company. London possessed no stronger place.

The booksellers moved their stocks there. Soon volumes, big and little, rose in piles from the floor, hundreds first, then thousands, each man's possessions separated, bearing his identification marks, for the booksellers would return to claim them when the Fire had beaten itself ineffectually against St. Paul's massive walls. Even should the great Cathedral suffer damage, their wealth in print and bindings would be safe, for how should fire exert itself below ground?

It seemed to many that a Divine Hand was protecting the Mother Church, the early home of Christianity in London, and that when a City in ashes should lie cold around it, still the majestic fane of St. Paul's should stand unharmed—unconquerable! The Fire of London had swept far past.

Then, shortly before eight o'clock this Tuesday evening, when darkness fell, flames broke out on the Cathedral roof.

The sentiment is false which deplores the destruction of Old St. Paul's as an irreparable loss to London. Age and association count for much; these no new builder

could replace; but Wren has given us a better, grander fabric, more worthy in every sense of the site it surmounts and the status of the metropolitan Cathedral. Old St. Paul's was indeed vast—in length and height, and vaster even than its measurements it appeared in its deep gloom. Tall, narrow windows, with one great rose window at the east end, gave but little light to the long nave, with its heavy obstructing pillars and twelve bays. The choir, of later date, was ill adjusted; the short tower had lost its spire, which at best was but timber covered with lead. Architecturally the Cathedral was not important. A few remains of the small cloister and of the Chapter House stand out of the ground, now converted to a garden.

If Paul's had withstood the Fire, and stood to-day, it could have taken but fourth or fifth rank when compared with the great cathedrals of the Continent, or, indeed, of our own country. Dean Milman said truly of Old St. Paul's that it had nothing of the prodigal magnificence, the harmonious variety of Lincoln, the stately majesty of York, the solemn grandeur of Canterbury, the perfect, sky-aspiring unity of Salisbury. It had not even one of the great conceptions which are the pride and boast of some of our other churches; neither the massy strength of Durham, "looking eternity" with its marvellous Galilee, nor the tower of Gloucester, nor the lantern of Ely, nor the rich picturesqueness of Beverley, nor the deep, receding, highly decorated arches of the west front of Peterborough.

And it had been misused as one hopes no other Cathedral in Christendom has suffered. The peal of four "Jesus

Bells" King Henry VIII had gambled away to Sir Miles Partridge at a single cast of the dice. The Knight won. Fuller quaintly tells, "Thus he brought the bells to ring in his pocket, but the ropes afterwards catched about his neck, and for some offence he was hanged in the days of King Edward VI." Paul's Walk, the length of the long nave, had since the Reformation been a place of public passage and barter, noisy with the clatter of footsteps and cries of trade. One recalls the last state under the Puritans, and Carlyle's biting phrase: "Paul's Cathedral is now a Horse-guard; horses stamp in the Canons' stalls there; and Paul's Cross itself, as smacking of Popery, where in fact Alablaster once preached flat Popery, is swept away altogether, with its leaden roof melted into bullets, or mixed with tin for culinary purposes."

Majestic as St. Paul's, crowning London from the hill, appeared to those who viewed it from afar, on close approach it became a pitiable monument to the rancour of Christian men. Long neglect had occurred under Elizabeth, when the fabric was damaged by the fire of 1561, which consumed the commanding steeple. The decay continued until the Cathedral's sorry state moved James I to ineffectual protest—the King to whom the many ruinous or ruined cathedrals in his native land were of inauspicious omen. Naturally, the Crown under James I had no money for such work. Nothing was, in fact, done until, supported by a zealous Churchman in King Charles I, Laud, then Bishop of London, found in the restoration of St. Paul's to something of its ancient state a project that appealed to his ambitious mind.

"Like a great skeleton, so pitifully handled that you might tell her ribs through her skin," the Cathedral had then become. In Laud's own words, it was ready to sink into its own ruins.

Inigo Jones's great Classical portico erected at the western end, and some reparation and bad new Gothic at the sides of the building, were all that had been accomplished when Civil War and the triumph of Puritanism shattered to pieces the scheme of restoration, and almost shattered the great fabric itself.

A legend that Cromwell contemplated selling St. Paul's to the Jews is probably untrue. That it should have had currency is testimony to the low esteem into which Erkenwald's Cathedral had fallen. The first act of the new masters of England was to seize all the balance remaining—above £17,000—of the funds for repairs originally collected by Laud. The scaffolds already raised for rebuilding the steeple were assigned to Colonel Jephson's regiment for £1,746 due for arrears of pay. On the scaffolding being struck, part of the south transept and some portions of the other roofs came down, and the ruins were left where they fell. The lead was begged by the City to augment their water pipes. The carving of the organ loft, screen, and stallwork, upon which skilled mediæval craftsmen had piously laboured, was torn down. Whatever painted glass survived in the windows was shattered. Mean shops, let out to seamstresses and hucksters, were raised in Inigo Jones's great portico, with chambers above and staircases leading to them. In May, 1645, all revenues of the Dean and Chapter were forfeited by Parliament.

The place hallowed by centuries of continuous prayer would have been silent to God's worship but for a sting to conscience of the London Aldermen. Cornelius Burgess, a Puritan divine who had ridden, armed with a case of pistols, at the head of the London Militia, was on their representation appointed Lecturer, with a stipend reserved for him of £400 a year. A part of the Cathedral's east end was walled in as his preaching house. Save this one enclosure, the sacred building was given over entirely to profane uses.

A chimney of a smith's forge pierced the Cathedral roof. Wooden balls and falling ninepins clattered in the precincts. The rude soldiers of the Commonwealth rode their horses up the steps—in so doing one broke his neck—and in intervals of sport and duty battered the effigies of the dead, destroying with implacable hate every symbol that savoured to them of Papistry, or else made the offices of the Church a subject of ribald mummery. A mare having foaled in this Cathedral stable, the colt was baptized by the soldiery, with blasphemous rites too repulsive for decent print.[1]

St. Paul's was purged of its grosser abuses when Charles II returned to the throne, and the service of the Church was resumed. But neglect and decay had left the fabric not only insecure, but dangerous. The weight of the roof had spread the walls. The tower was

[1] See a rare quarto tract, "News from Powles, Or the New Reformation of the Army: with a true Relation of a Covlt that was foaled in the Cathedrall Church of St. *Paul* in London, and how it was Publiquely *Baptized* by *Paul Hobsons* souldiers. Printed in the yeer 1649."

leaning by settlement of one of the ancient pillars. Stones were flawed and mouldering away. It was not until 1666 that materials for effective restoration were available, and on the 27th August Dr. Wren—with much misgiving,—John Evelyn, Bishop Henchman, Dean Sancroft and others made an inspection, and that day they ordered plans and estimates to be prepared. Eight days later the Great Fire of London had reached Old St. Paul's, and decided its fate for ever.

Live brands carried overhead by the wind brought the Fire to the Cathedral. Martin, a bookseller in the Churchyard, saw the dread work of destruction begin, the flames rising at the edge of a board that, among others, was laid on the roof where the lead had broken away. The dry timber forming the roof above the stone vaulting burnt furiously, with such a mass of flame that Taswell, the Westminster scholar, standing at the King's Bridge, the landing-place at New Palace Yard more than a mile distant, was able before nine o'clock to read very clearly by the blaze a diminutive edition of Terence that he carried in his pocket.

Large parts of the roof, both stone and burning timber, fell in, and the Cathedral became a roaring cauldron of fire. Evelyn declares that the scaffolds erected for the survey greatly contributed to the disaster. The unexpected and bewildering effect of the terrific heat upon the masses of masonry was a cause of wonderment to onlookers. Vincent writes: "The church, though all of stone outward, though naked of houses about it, and though so high above all buildings in the City, yet within a while doth yield to the violent assaults of the conquering

flames, and strangely takes fire at the top; now the lead melts and runs down, as if it had been snow before the sun; and the great beams and massy stones, with a great noise, fall on the pavement, and break through into Faith's Church underneath; now great flakes of stone scale, and peal off strangely from the side of the walls."

"The very stones are crumbled and broken into shivers and slatts," says another. Stones split asunder with the force of an explosion, and fragments, 20 lbs., 40 lbs., and 100 lbs. in weight, were broken off and hurled considerable distances.

Evelyn pictures the stones of St. Paul's flying "like grenadoes. It was astonishing (says he) to see what immense stones the heat had in a manner calcined, so that all the ornaments, columns, friezes, capitals, and projectures of massy Portland stone flew off, even to the very roof, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no less than six acres by measure) was totally melted."

Molten lead dripped in silvery beads from the roof, raining down upon the broken stones and tombs that strewed the Cathedral floor, and there collecting, ran out into the streets in a stream. The very pavements glowed with a fiery redness, so that neither horse nor man was able to tread upon them. The debris, clattering down, had stopped all the passage-ways, and no help could be applied.

Part of the side walls of the aisles fell out, and by openings so made and gaping doors and windows spectators in the night looked straight into the heart of the fire. Central in the nave, towards the altar, the red flames

burnt over the tomb of Sir John Beauchamp, Constable of Dover Castle—"the Duke Humphrey's tomb" of the unthinking Londoners. One greater than he slept his long sleep in the choir—"Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster." About the recumbent effigies of the Knight and his second wife, Constance of Castile, the flames played, reaching up to the helmet and spear and target covered with horn suspended above the tomb. Half of the memorial statue, in armour, of Sir Nicholas Bacon, the famous father of a more famous son, survived the Fire, the remainder crashing to the floor; his leaden coffin, bearing an inscription which recorded his twenty years' service under Elizabeth, was unharmed. The fine old tomb stood in St. Dunstan's Chapel of Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, forbear of the lawyers of Lincoln's Inn, who still wear his arms. Sir Christopher Hatton, Elizabeth's dancing Chancellor, was commemorated by a great and garish monument in the choir, which crushed aside the modest tablets of Sir Philip Sydney and his father-in-law, Sir Francis Walsingham, hence the couplet—

> Philip and Francis have no tomb,
> For great Christopher takes all the room.

Many Bishops of London, Deans, and men of mark had their more humble stones, and one and all perished in the vortex of fierce flame which St. Paul's high walls confined. Some tombs fell into St. Faith's beneath. Of all the number, there are to-day but a few mutilated, irrecognizable fragments reverently preserved in the crypt, and—solitary in its perfection—the shrouded effigy of

Dean Donne (died 1631) apparently rising from his funeral urn, which alone has come unscathed out of the Great Fire. It is told that this was designed by the Dean's directions in his lifetime, and that he posed for the part in his own study.[1] Isaac Walton says that an unknown friend wrote this epitaph "with a coal"—that is to say, charcoal—on the old Cathedral wall over his grave—

> Reader, I am to let thee know
> Donne's body only lies below;
> For could the grave his soul comprise,
> Earth would be richer than the skies.

The King and the Duke of York, riding on horseback about the City, stayed to watch the destruction of the great Cathedral, upon the restoration of which their father had laboured. Inigo Jones's Classical portico had been built largely at the cost of Charles I, and from its pediment his statue had been toppled over and broken to pieces when the Parliament seized power. The portico withstood the fire, though greatly damaged, large flakes of stone being split asunder, and little remaining entire. The Spanish account I have before cited records that "In the very sight of the King himself the fire proceeded to crown itself the conqueror of the highest parts of the great building. The flames seized upon the carved timber of which the church was in places composed, licked it up in a twinkling, and in a few hours left this

[1] Donne's effigy stood in Old St. Paul's on the north side of the Choir, and being erect slipped down into St. Faith's after the fall of the roof had crushed in the floor. In Wren's Cathedral the effigy, again erect, stands in the south ambulatory wall of the Choir.

marvellous building, the labour of many years, a smoking mass of lamentable ruins."

The great nave, the tower, and walls of the choir and transepts withstood the shock of the falling roof, too stoutly built to fall themselves. Flames burst through every shattered window. Gaunt spaces once filled with painted glass, through which a rosy light had fallen upon close ranks of kneeling worshippers and gorgeous processions of the Church, and roof open to the sky, complete the picture of desolation which every print after the Fire presents. In place of a cathedral's well-ordered interior confusion was thickly strewn—with table tombs laid open and recumbent figures of alabaster fallen to the floor and broken in falling, and shields and devices by skilled mediæval carvers heaped amidst the waste—the discord that only a fire can create.

Night and day St. Paul's continued burning. The scene after dawn had broken was impressed upon Taswell's memory—

"Soon after sunrising I endeavoured to reach St. Paul's. The ground was so hot as almost to scorch my shoes; and the air so intensely warm that unless I had stopped some time upon Fleet Bridge to rest myself, I must have fainted under the extreme languor of my spirits. After giving myself a little time to breathe I made the best of my way to St. Paul's. And now let any person judge of the violent emotion I was in when I perceived the metal belonging to the bells melting; the ruinous condition of the walls; whole heaps of stone of a large circumference tumbling down with a great noise just upon my feet, ready to crush me to death. I prepared

myself for returning back again, having first loaded my pockets with several pieces of bell metal. In my way home I saw several engines which were bringing up to its assistance all on fire, and those concerned with them escaping with great eagerness from the flames, which spread instantaneous almost like a wild-fire; and at last, accoutred with my sword and helmet, which I picked up among many others in the ruins, I traversed this torrid zone back again."

By the Cathedral a dreadful sight confronted him—

"I forgot to mention that near the east walls of St. Paul's a human body presented itself to me, parched up, as it were, with the flames; whole as to skin, meagre as to flesh, yellow as to colour. This was an old decrepit woman who fled here for safety, imagining the flames would not have reached her there. Her clothes were burnt, and every limb reduced to a coal."

Flames appeared on the battlements of Old St. Paul's as late as Thursday night, forty-eight hours after the outbreak. Of all the vast roof, there remained in place only a fragment at the east end of the choir, over the altar, the rest having fallen. The destruction was so complete that homeless people, subsequently seeking refuge in the Cathedral, could find no place in which to take shelter save with the dead in the vaults.

The Grand Duke Cosmo III of Tuscany, a Royal guest of Charles II, passed by the pitiful ruin. "Of this stupendous fabric (he wrote) there is nothing now to contemplate except the vestiges of its ancient magnificence. One sees only a huge heap of stones, cemented together by the lead with which the church was covered;

this when melted fell among the ruins, which have entirely covered the relics of antiquity that were there formerly, and demolished many splendid monuments, both of Catholic bishops and other distinguished men, of which scarcely any trace is to be seen."

The falling roof broke open the tomb within the choir and leaden coffin of Robert de Braybroke, Bishop of London and Lord Chancellor of England. In it was found entire the body laid there 262 years before, "teeth in the head, red hair on the head, beard, &c., skin and nails on the toes and fingers, without cirecloth, embalming spices, or any other condite." It was so dried up that, being set upon the feet, it stood stiff as a plank, having defied putrefaction. This some attributed to the dead man's sanctity. The prelate's remains, it is grievous to learn, being removed to the Chapter House, for years thereafter became a public show. Lord Coleraine saw them in 1675. They were in due time reinterred in Wren's vast Cathedral, but no inscription marks the Bishop's final resting-place. Two other bodies so dried were discovered when the north aisle was cleared of debris.[1]

[1] This hideous story of the violation of the tomb of Dean Colet in Old St. Paul's, broken in the Great Fire of London, I should hesitate to credit were it not vouched for by John Aubrey, the antiquary, whose words I give: "After the conflagration his monument being broken, his coffin, which was lead, was full of a liquor which conserved the body. Mr. Wyld and Ralph Greatorex tasted it, and 'twas of a kind of insipid tast, something of an ironish tast. The body felt, to the probe of a stick which they thrust into a chinke, like brawne. The coffin was of lead, and layd in the wall about 2 foot ½ above the surface of the floore." (*Brief Lives*, i. 181.) The

St. Faith's under Paul's is a tragic story. To protect their riches stored there, the booksellers had sought to make assurance doubly sure. When they had passed in the last volume, and books to a large part of the value of £150,000 were piled up—so much contemporaries assert the stationers' total loss to have been—they strengthened and sealed each door and window, and with great caution and prudence even the least avenue through which the smallest spark might penetrate was stopped.

How it was that disaster occurred we may never know—disaster absolutely complete. Never since the burning of the great library at Alexandria had there been such a holocaust of books as in the Great Fire of London. One said that the crash of the Cathedral roof falling broke through the arches of Faith's, the heat of that inferno raging above having calcined the stones and reduced them to powder. There is a second story, told to Pepys by the booksellers Kirton and Martin in very similar words, that the merchandise laid in the Churchyard first became ignited by burning timbers from the houses on the drapers' side (Paternoster Row) falling upon it, and the fire entered through the windows of St. Faith's Church, then seized upon the pews and burnt all the books within

want of reverence for the dead we know from the post-mortem wanderings in Westminster Abbey of Katherine of Valois, Henry V's "darling Kate" and Consort, whose poor body, disentombed and placed in a chest, was exposed to the public gaze. One hates Pepys for the crowning indignity he cast upon it. "I had the upper part of her body in my hands, and I did kiss her mouth, reflecting upon it that I did kiss a Queen, and that this was my birthday, thirty-six years old, that I did kiss a Queen." (*Diary*, 1669, Feb. 23.)

and the pillars of the church, till the roof collapsed. The books continued ablaze for a week. A third account is circumstantial in detail, and quite different. It is that the books survived the general conflagration; then the booksellers, anxious for their property, ventured too early to open St. Faith's, and the piled volumes, greatly heated by the Fire above them, broke into flame immediately air was admitted. There is agreement only in the essential fact of destruction.

The sight of shattered tombs and broken effigies tumbled in amid the black ashes of the books in St. Faith's vault inspired the writer of a contemporary poem, four of whose verses I give—

> See yet another Ruin; here were laid
> Choice Authors, by the Servants of the Muses:
> And here to Sacrilegious flames betray'd
> To spare or Wit or Temples fire refuses.
>
> These half burnt Papers lying here, needs must
> Be for the Libriary of the Dead mistook:
> And for a Schollar faln himself to Dust
> Ashes of paper is a proper Book.
>
> Couldst thou not, *Pauls*, in all thy Vaults of Stone,
> Preserve these Papers from the tyrant flame?
> When thou by Paper, and by it alone,
> Art still preserv'd to triumph o're the same.
>
> Were't not for Books where had thy Memory been?
> But that thou art, in *Dugdales* learned Story
> And beautious Illustrations to be seen,
> Thy name had been as lost as is thy Glory.

Close by the Cathedral's south-west wall—seeming, indeed, to be actually attached—another church of a

City parish had been built. "St. Paul's," wrote Fuller, "may be called the Mother Church indeed, having one babe in her body [St. Faith's] and another in her arms [St. Gregory's]." The little tower of St. Gregory by Paul's rose less than the height of the Cathedral nave. The church had been partially dismantled in Laud's great scheme for the improvement of the Cathedral and afterwards restored, and in the Fire of London was totally destroyed.

CHAPTER VIII

FIRE IN THE LIBERTIES

NOWHERE was the advance of the flames watched with keener anxiety than at Christ's Hospital. This was a nerve centre in all times of public calamity. It had been so in the previous year of the Plague. The children receiving education at the Bluecoat School of Edward VI's foundation comprised not only the orphans. Sons and daughters of freemen, paying scholars, came and went daily, traversing heavily infected areas of the City. Yet the school passed through the ordeal, not unscathed, but with less mortality than was common outside its walls. "God had given such a blessing to their endeavours," said the masters in a petition to the Governors, "that all this time of sickness not more than thirty-two children of the number of 260 in the house are dead of all diseases."

So, too, when the Fire began to spread through the City, in every parish were relatives anxiously concerned for the safety of their "Blue" children.

The school was gravely imperilled on Tuesday afternoon. The Governors had taken timely precautions. Boys and girls above two hundred in number were despatched to the Nagg's Head estate at Islington, a gift to the foundation four years earlier by Mr. John Browne.

There they lodged the night, and afterwards were removed to another house belonging to the Hospital at Clerkenwell, where they were "dyetted" for four days, and then sent on to Ware and Hertford.

The Fire, advancing from the south-east, first struck the great church of the Grey Friars. Its high walls and roof gave effectual shelter to many of the buildings. Few people realize the immense size of these conventual churches, which till the dissolution of the religious houses were dotted about London's small area. This one was 311 feet in length, no less than three times the length of Wren's Christ Church, Newgate Street, which succeeds it. Fate had spared this thirteenth-century building from the despoiling hand of Henry VIII. The choir, which alone covered all the ground required by Wren when rebuilding after the Fire, had been given by the monarch to the parishioners for use as a parish church. The great nave made a storehouse for the reception of wine and other prizes taken from the French, and serving a useful purpose in this and like offices, it had escaped demolition. Accordingly the fabric—desecrated, indeed, and with a public passage-way driven between the choir and the nave—stood substantially unharmed in 1666, a monument of the piety of its early builders, foremost among whom was Margaret, Queen of Edward I. Beneath the stones of Christ Church, here in the heart of the City, still rest unmarked the remains of three English Queens—of Margaret herself, of Isabella, wife of Edward II, Philippa, wife of Edward III, and also of Joan, Queen of Scots.

The Grey Friars' church had sustained some injury

in the earthquake which shook London on the 6th April, 1580, when a large stone was dislodged from the roof. Its fall during sermon time killed one worshipper and mortally wounded another. This is thought to have been the earthquake referred to by the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Sc. 3—

"'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years."

Most of the priory buildings survived in 1666; in fact, this sheltered corner within the City wall, with Newgate towering near, recalled in all essentials the old conventual settlements that earlier had been so characteristic a feature of London. Only the grey-cowled friars were themselves absent. The friars' cloister, behind the church, stood erect. It enclosed a square of lawn; the plot which, paved over, still bore the name of "the Garden" when tramped by Bluecoat boys of our own generation. The claustral buildings, though protected by the church, did not escape the flames. Whittington's Library remained in use till early last century, and part was standing in 1828. It had been built over the north cloister walk by that famous Lord Mayor in 1429. The friars' refectory, or hall, forming the west side of the cloister, was, however, severely damaged. The hall was found after a careful survey in 1680 to need rebuilding. The friars' great dorter, or dormitory, enclosing the cloister on the east, was ruined in its upper part. Elsewhere, when the flames had passed, was nothing but ruins, save only (a brief school chronicle relates) "about three wards towards the sick ward and several other rooms there, as also the wardrobe of this

Hospital over the south cloister." Eighty of the children were afterwards brought back and accommodated in the fire-scarred buildings, when the cloister was boarded up to keep them out, "being thought to be very dangerous since the late fire." School did not reassemble for fourteen months.

It is impossible to tell exactly to what extent the great church suffered in the Fire, but Wren has been accused of unnecessary destruction of the ancient fabric. The school chronicle speaks of "the glazed windows of the church on that [south cloister] side being very little damnified." Money spent by the churchwardens in clearing the church floor, removing stones, and making doorways also suggests that the main part of the fabric was left secure. Its rebuilding by Wren was not begun till 1677. No life was lost. In commemoration of that fact the Bluecoat boys long afterwards observed the 2nd September, the anniversary of the Fire's outbreak, as an annual holiday.

The quiet scholastic foundation stood against the noise of Newgate Market—the street we know to-day as Newgate Street, an unobstructed way for the never-ceasing traffic to and from the City, but then the Shambles, an open meat market. Wide and straight, like Cheapside, the street had for a great part of its length a middle row of sheds and stalls, kept by butchers, tripe-sellers, and the like. Country people who came in with barrows and baskets added to the confusion and rough liveliness of the place. Pepys's adventure as his coach passed in the press I recalled in an earlier chapter. Aside, in the old Stinking Lane (to-day King Edward Street) was

Butchers Hall, built about 1548 upon the site of the parsonage house of St. Nicholas Shambles, a church destroyed at the Reformation, and land taken out of the churchyard. The Hall was destroyed as the Fire struck the east of Greyfriars, and Poulters Hall, but a few paces distant, suffered a like fate.

Quickly the flames made a clearance of Newgate Market and the alleys which opened upon it from the south, and thrusting forward burst upon Newgate. The gate and prison in the City Wall then standing were largely the work of Richard Whittington, at whose cost the structure had been "re-edified"—another of his public works that had done much to ennoble his memory with the citizens. I failed to find any record of Newgate in the Fire, but its stout masonry must needs have offered considerable resistance. Repairs afterwards attempted indicate that it suffered great injury; they were, indeed, abandoned for what appears to have been complete rebuilding. The felons were marched off under escort to Southwark, but in the turmoil and confusion some of the worst characters escaped.

Through Newgate the flames turned in the direction of Smithfield, but made little headway.

"The Fire of London began in Pudding Lane and ended at Pie Corner." If so great an event can be said to have been epitomized in a sentence, this is the one; but if time be meant the legend does not bear investigation. The Fire continued to spread about Cripplegate twenty hours after Pie Corner had been razed. Pepys tells that his clerk Hewer this Tuesday had gone from Seething Lane "to see how his mother

did, and comes home late, telling us how he had been forced to remove her to Islington, her house in Pie Corner being burned." The Fire was stopped at Cock Lane, famous a century later for its ghost. At the corner, on the wall of the Fortune of War tavern, there stood till recent years the carved wooden figure of an uncommonly fat boy, bearing an inscription which told the passer-by: "This boy is in memory put up for the late Fire of London occasioned by the Sin of Gluttony, 1666." [1] As an explanation of the origin of the Fire, this is as good as some others. St. Bartholomew's Hospital and that magnificent Norman fragment, the church of St. Bartholomew the Great, were spared. This was doubly fortunate, for in the Hospital were sheltered a number of wounded and sick men from the wars. Though the Hospital escaped the flames, the charity was one of the worst sufferers by the Fire, no fewer than 190 of its rent-producing houses in the City being destroyed. St. Thomas's Hospital stood at safe distance

[1] The figure of the Fat Boy, now gilt, has been set in the wall of the new building which replaces the Fortune of War. The little wings shown in J. T. Smith's print of 1791 have disappeared, and a recent careful examination revealed no trace of the famous inscription. Burn (*Tradesmen's Tokens*) tells that its propriety was supported by a Nonconformist divine, preaching on the anniversary of the Great Fire, who asserted "that the calamity could not have been occasioned by the sin of blasphemy, for in that case it would have begun in Billingsgate; nor lewdness, for then Drury Lane would have been first on fire; nor lying, for then the flames had reached the City from Westminster Hall. No, my beloved, it was occasioned by the sin of gluttony, for it began at Pudding Lane, and ended at Pie Corner."

across the river in Southwark, but its City endowments underwent a like disaster, and the building itself was for a time imperilled by some thatched houses about it which took fire from flying sparks, and burnt for five hours.

In its sweep south the Fire completely enveloped St. Sepulchre's Church before Newgate.

Little in the appearance of the fabric to-day suggests the terrible ordeal through which St. Sepulchre's passed. The mediæval tower stands, with four high pinnacles, a conspicuous City landmark. From its summit one "rich Dorrington," a disappointed legal suitor, in 1600 threw himself headlong and broke his neck. The church walls largely withstood the flames, and have been repaired and recased. But the restoration carried out in 1880 everywhere disclosed the ravages of the Fire, in remains of ancient window jambs and arches and mouldings and tracery, the stones of which were much calcined. A double piscina is preserved, badly mutilated by the heat. Within the tower, still so high and strong, was a raging inferno. Heavy beams composing the different stages burnt one after another; the bells fell to the ground, and lying there melted. Afterwards the churchwardens paid £22 18*s*. "for cleansing the bell mettle from the dust." The sacred vessels of the church were so completely obliterated that a Mr. Willmot was employed to refine the bars cast from the pools of molten lead which had rained down from the roof, "wherein it is supposed the parish plate may be found!" The whole picture of destruction is suggested in that passage from vestry minutes. St. Sepulchre's was so named

after the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and had a grim association with Newgate, for there the execution bell was tolled when the cart started on its way to Tyburn. Simon Ford, the Royalist divine, whose hagiology is bad as his verse, writes of the Fire—

> A lofty Pile (how humbled) next appears,
> Once christ'ned 'twas Saint Sepulchers:
> Which since it felt the all-interring Flame,
> The Saint lost, kept its empty Name.
> They tell us here of One unmelted Bell
> That toll'd Condemned Felons Knell.

I suspect this last was not in the belfry, but was the small hand bell, a relic snatched from the Fire, that to-day may be seen under glass in the church. It had been used by Robert Dowe, a pious Elizabethan citizen, in his self-imposed task of bringing admonition (if not comfort) to the felons, before whose cell it was his custom to stand overnight, ring his bell, and recite certain verses, warning them to be prepared, for to-morrow they should die, and by timely repentance to save themselves from eternal flames.

When Dowe himself died in 1605 he left £50 to St. Sepulchre's for the felons' knell to be perpetuated.

Now the Fire was in the Liberties through both the western gates, its farthest advance being along the line of Fleet Street. Ludgate is shown at evening in what is believed to be a contemporary painting, with blazing houses about it, standing dark and solid against the red background of the flames. The warders, flying for their lives, opened the cells of the debtors incarcerated there,

freemen of the City who had met with adversity, and the prisoners broke gaol and scattered. High above the gateway and portcullis when Ludgate was rebuilt in Elizabeth's reign a statue of the Virgin Queen had been placed, and it remained upon its niche but little harmed throughout the Fire, a stiff and formal figure, with ruff and expansive farthingale, looking down the hill. The statue has been preserved, and stands to-day over the vestry door of St. Dunstan-in-the-West in Fleet Street. Other relics of Ludgate from the Fire are the ancient figures of King Lud and his sons, Androgeus and Theomantus, now at St. Dunstan's, Regent's Park. They showed indications before repair of having been much damaged by the flames.

Against Ludgate, the fifteenth-century church of St. Martin's was so far destroyed that Wren rebuilt from the foundations, designing the slender leaden steeple to direct the eye up to the huge dome of his cathedral. Part of the church's western wall rests upon the ancient City Wall. The sacred vessels were saved, 100 ozs. of gilt plate and two silver flagons weighing 124 ozs.; in their poverty after the Fire the churchwardens twice raised money by pawning them. Sir Thomas Berrie, a merchant of the Staple, had given money to provide twelve poor parishioners each week with twelve penny loaves, and his curious brass, snatched from destruction, finds a place in the new church.

A mass of flame burnt into the night on the height about Ludgate, with blazing St. Paul's the central spectacle, after myriads of sparks showered far in advance by the impetuous wind had carried the Fire west. From

the crest of the hill the Liberty lay out at the spectator's feet, threaded by the narrow line of Fleet Street, whence the red roof-tiles of the timber-framed houses, packed closely together, extended to Holborn. The scene differed greatly from that within the walled City. A Royal Palace, imposing still in height and dimensions, although a Royal residence no longer, stood where the little Fleet River joined the Thames—Bridewell, of unhappy memories to King Henry VIII. Its high walls and hexagonal turrets of red Tudor brick, inset with the characteristic diaper patterns in black, as at Hampton Court, were raised around two main courts, looking strong and solid with freestone lavishly used on mullion windows and battlements and arched doorways. Immediately behind spread the buildings and courtyards of the Earl of Dorset's town mansion, and on this south side of Fleet Street towards the Thames were glimpses of green trees in the Earl's garden and in the wide demesne of the Temple. Wedged in close by Dorset House, on a site where earlier had stood the private playhouse, was the Salisbury Court Theatre, a wooden structure hastily erected at the Restoration—the only London playhouse burnt in the Great Fire. On its stage Betterton had played with Davenant's company. In the distant view, above the low houses, might have been picked out the Round of the Temple Church, the great gate turrets of Middle Temple, the towers of three parish churches, and astride the street Temple Bar.

As dusk came on, the after-glow of a red sunset and darkness increased by the heavy smoke cloud trailing far

distant from London, the lights of isolated fires showed plainly and with more threatening aspect amid the confused mass of buildings, while a great flame sped along the Thames-side.

Where the ground fell below Ludgate and the Old Bailey to the Fleet River was the oldest settled quarter of London beyond the Wall. Long years back the tanners of leather had dug their curing pits by the banks of the stream towards Newgate, and to this day the district is intersected by winding alleys, bearing quaint names like Bear Alley, Seacole Lane and Turnagain Lane, which bespeak their mediæval origin. It was a fetid spot, with the Fleet River as vile and stinking as when Ben Jonson wrote the furious lines of *The Famous Voyage* upon it and the locality generally—

> Whose banks upon
> Your Fleet Lane Furies and hot Cooks do dwell,
> That with still scalding steams make the place hell.

The Fire swept the ground clean, as rarely it had been before, burning along the Fleet wharves and sheds as far as Holborn Bridge, there having been time to effect only a partial clearance. Here beneath the shadow of St. Paul's lay the Fleet debtors' prison of unhappy memory, on a site partly covered to-day by the Congregational Memorial Hall, and close about it the small area of the Fleet "rules," privileged ground whereon debtors and bankrupts able to find bail and money for the wardens' extortions were permitted to live unmolested by their creditors. The Fleet Prison, sacked and burnt by Wat Tyler's rebels and rebuilt, again

succumbed to the flames of 1666. Sir Jeremy Whichcote then held the wardenship under Royal Patent, a humane and estimable man, whose conduct stands out in bold relief against the prison's long record of cruel misusage. He himself took care of the homeless debtors, who had momentarily been liberated, acquired Caronne House, in South Lambeth, for their accommodation, and afterwards rebuilt the gaol at his own expense on the historic site by Fleet Ditch.[1]

The Fire thrust forward up the rise of Fleet Street, leaving Bridewell at Thames-side a roofless shell, the ground piled high with brick debris, twisted iron, and molten lead. The flames raged with such intolerable heat that the very dead in their graves were burnt. Bridewell's walls were too stoutly made to fall. This had been "a wide large house of the King's Majesty" when the young Edward VI granted it for the foundation of Bridewell Hospital, neglected by Henry VIII after his unhappy experience there with Queen Catherine while awaiting the divorce, and already in sad decay. The charity had few funds to spend on the fabric, and to outward appearance Bridewell remained as Henry VIII had built it in the early years of his reign, a Royal Palace, its walls and battlements rising thirty-six feet in height, with Long Gallery and Great Chamber of Audience and all necessary offices, fitting for the lodging of the King and his Consort, and for Councils of State. The Thames front and quadrangle were hopelessly shattered,

[1] For the third time the Fleet Prison was burnt down when the Gordon rioters broke into it in 1780. It was finally cleared away in 1846.

a single tower alone standing firm, but the Fire did less havoc in the northern court, separated by the chapel, and parts of the Tudor structure there, retaining their original character, were incorporated in the rebuilding and survived a century ago.

Thomas Ellwood, the Quaker, was taken a prisoner to Old Bridewell four years before the Great Fire, and in his *Autobiography* gives many particulars about it. "The hall was one of the largest I was ever in. . . . The room in length was three score feet, and had breadth proportionate. In it on the front side were very large bay windows, in which stood a large table. It had other very large tables in it with benches round, and at that time the floor was covered with rushes, against some solemn festival which I heard it was bespoken for." This clearly was Henry's palace, but little changed. Bridewell served many purposes, as a place of detention, a house of correction for vagabonds and harlots, and a school for the training of boys in useful trades; and it was, too, the City prison for refractory apprentices, and so remains to-day. In its large unused spaces 4,000 quarters of the City's corn was stored, and this was destroyed in the Fire. There was also at Bridewell the City's coal, kept for the provision of the poor against winter. A part was removed, and the remainder much damaged. Happily for London in the hour of its distress, the larger granary at Bridge House, Southwark, was not reached by the flames, and famine was not added to the other calamities suffered by the citizens.

The dead I have mentioned. Hugh Knowling, the chapel warden, concerned for these burnt relics of

humanity, covered them reverently with earth and sand, an office of charity (with others) which put the Governors in his debt, then took the questionable course of "attaching" a silver communion cup, gilt, with cover, and other pieces of plate, from which his sacrilegious fingers were loosened only after compensation made. The children were sent away with their art-masters, with whom they were subsequently lodged till a new Bridewell rose out of the ruins.

A man of note lay buried before the high altar in the neighbouring church of St. Bride—Wynkyn de Worde, who brought the art of printing into Fleet Street. He should ere this have been honoured by a statue if the Fleet Street Press in the rush of life had time to think of its debt. His tomb perished with the church, an ancient building considerably enlarged in the fifteenth century, which met full square the onset of the Fire; the bells melted in the stone tower; part only of the church plate was saved. There survives by the north door the vault of the Holden family, with their coat of arms carved in stone, bearing date 1657. Amid the houses built close against the churchyard, all levelled with the ground, was that of Pepys's father, in which the diarist was himself born, and out of it was carried to his baptism in St. Bride's Church. He paid a sad visit to the ruins.

Fire had occurred at Dorset House early this fateful Tuesday. It happened that the Duke of York, passing in his barge upon the Thames, had seen a live firebrand blown by the wind upon the mansion, and thanks to his prompt alarm the outbreak was quenched.

"I hear that Dorset House is burnt down, but I hope it is not so," wrote Lady Thanet from Stamford to the Dowager Countess of Pembroke. It was, in fact, completely burnt out when the greater Fire came up. This historic house, originally the town hostel of the Bishops of Salisbury till a forced sale in Queen Elizabeth's reign to Sir Richard Sackville, was one of the few in the City that remained a nobleman's dwelling. Many additions had been made by successive Earls of Dorset, who for a century resided in Fleet Street. Four of the Earls had been born there. The mansion, large and irregular, was of such extent that it had become divided into Great and Little Dorset House. There are, unfortunately, no family letters at Knole which touch upon the catastrophe. Dorset House was not rebuilt.

High life and low mingled here, in the manner which made strange neighbours in every crowded mediæval city. Close against the Earl's mansion and the erstwhile Royal Palace spread a nest of foul rookeries and dilapidated mansions, tinder ready for the flames—Alsatia, upper and lower, and "Sharp Island." That the sanctuary should have survived the Fire of London, and in a few years have revived in the fullness of its dissolute life depicted in Shadwell's play, *The Squire of Alsatia*, is testimony to the extraordinary tolerance of the age for such a City plague spot. The White Friars' Priory, the original sanctuary, had filled the whole space between Whitefriars Street and the Temple on the land falling to the Thames. Some few of its scattered buildings survived, but the greater part had been pulled down at

the Dissolution, and substantial houses erected as residences for noblemen and others. These inhabitants found life intolerable in a locality infested by rogues, who maintained the ancient privilege of refuge by force rather than by any acknowledged right; and the larger houses, abandoned to decay, were divided each into as many as twenty and thirty tenements, fulfilling their part in the medley of dirty lodgings, dram-shops, brothels and the like which made the sanctuary all that was evil.

The Fire brought consternation to the bravos, fraudulent debtors, cheats and thieves who crowded into the mean alleys. It broke into hiding-places where the King's writ had successfully been defied, and setting alight the houses from basement to roof burnt up to Fleet Street, driving the sanctuary men helter-skelter in search of safety. Little of Alsatia remained that was not purged by the Fire. Its daily round has been well portrayed by Sir Walter Scott in some brilliant pages of *The Fortunes of Nigel*. Even to-day, when printing houses chiefly have replaced the fetid dens of Alsatia's hey-day, its squalid aspect comes to mind when one walks the narrow passages of Whitefriars—Hanging Sword Alley, Magpie Alley, Primrose Hill, and the rest.

A substantial wall shut off the lawyers in the Temple from their lawless neighbours of Alsatia, and the brick houses of King's Bench Walk, then newly built, gave a temporary check to the Fire's advance. The Inn of the Inner Temple, stretching from near Fleet Street to the Thames, offered a broad front to the oncoming flames, and it was almost entirely burnt out. When amidst heaps of debris the Benchers of Inner Temple

afterwards surveyed their property, they found standing the ancient church of the Knights Templars, which was jointly maintained by the two Societies, their hall, part of Fig Tree Court, and the gateway to Fleet Street. The last had been rebuilt in the reign of James I, with the timber-fronted house, half resting upon its stout arch, which has been preserved by the County Council as one of London's historic monuments. Substantially nothing else escaped the Fire.

The flames burnt to the boundaries of the neighbour Inn, but there were stopped, and by remarkable good fortune Middle Temple lost but a single house—Lamb Building—in the Great Fire.

As so often was the case elsewhere, the Fire of 1666 found the Templars entirely unprepared. No appliances for dealing with an extensive outbreak were provided. Water was available in abundance, the New River service having been brought to the Inn, and an unlimited quantity was procurable from the Thames, but there were no means at hand to turn the supply on the burning piles. The flames, when at length they had overcome the brick buildings of King's Bench Walk, spread with alarming rapidity among the older timber-framed houses of which the Temple was largely composed.

The Benchers had two full days' warning of their peril as the Fire swept across London from the Bridge. They had seen the good results that attended the first use of gunpowder in the City this same day. Sailors from the Fleet were sent in to assist them, with barrels of Naval powder, and this they were able to supplement by purchase from the store of a local grocer. In addition,

the Inn secured the services of four engineers, at a fee of a sovereign each, to aid in the demolition of buildings. By the judicious use of gunpowder in blowing up houses, and so leaving open spaces, it was found practicable to check the flames in several places.[1] But always the Fire again obtained the mastery, fanned by a fresh wind which drove sparks and live embers before it.

"Neither boat, barge, cart nor coach is to be had, all the streets full of goods, and the fire flaming into the very Temple," wrote one J. Barker, who had escaped from his chambers with difficulty, carrying away a part of his law books.

The gravest peril to the Temple came from the north. Fleet Street, an old highway to Westminster and perilously narrow, was built throughout its length with timber-framed and gabled houses, some of ancient date, others no earlier than Elizabeth and James I, that had been erected on the lands of abbots and ecclesiastics dispossessed at the Suppression. It burnt like matchwood, the Fire passing from house to house with unprecedented speed. From Fleet Ditch to Middle Temple

[1] It was not at the Great Fire of 1666, but a subsequent fire which broke out in Pump Court, Middle Temple, on the night of Sunday, the 26th January, 1679, that the famous expedient of pumping beer on the burning houses was resorted to. "The Thames being frozen," says Luttrell, "there was great scarcity of water, it being so bitter a frost, the water hung in icicles at the eves of the houses. The engine plaid away many barrels of beer to stop the fire: but the chief way of stopping the fire was by blowing up the houses: in doing which many were hurt, particularly the Earl of Faversham, whose skull was almost broken: but he is now in some hopes of recovery." (*Brief Relation of State Affairs*, i, 7.)

Gate there was not a single wide side street, and towards the river two only—Salisbury Court and Water Lane (Whitefriars Street)—were capacious enough to admit a cart. The rest were mere foot alleys giving access to the dense property built between the highway and the Temple boundaries, seldom more than seven feet dividing opposite houses. Once the Fire spread back from the highway it was left to burn itself out, for nothing could be done.

Pleydell Court thus burnt, and the advancing flames demolished Serjeants Inn. This house of the Serjeants-at-Law and of the Judges stood amid a garden adjoining Inner Temple. It had a small but ornate hall, the painted windows emblazoned with forty-three coats of arms of Fellows of the Inn, and chapel and kitchen and many residential chambers. All was destroyed. Ram Alley (to-day Hare Place), an outwork of the lawless Alsatia, was alight from end to end, and flames raged in Mitre Court. The Mitre Tavern, afterwards made famous by Samuel Johnson's patronage, stood back from Fleet Street, with double yards. It escaped with no great damage, though the gallery was ignited.

Fire enveloped the Temple on two sides, and had burnt the length of King's Bench Walk, at that time its most fashionable residential quarter. The Crown Office and the King's Bench Office, both situated there, were consumed early in the night. The Alienation Office, standing in a large garden, was in flames. The worst forebodings seemed about to be realized when the mass of fire from Fleet Street, having burnt down the courts and alleys, broke upon Mitre Court Buildings,

within the Temple, and raged through them. Close at hand was the Master's House Dr. Ball, the Master of the Temple, had little more than a year before built a new residence at his own charges, and had the mortification of learning that the whole structure had been destroyed.

It seemed that nothing but the intervention of Providence could save the historic church of the Knights Templars. Relief came at a most opportune hour. But those who laboured with much heat and sweat to check the flames were not idle. The peril of the stone church, itself stoutly built by mediæval craftsmen, was gravely augmented by the presence of a number of small shops which had been allowed to be raised up against its southern and western walls. Gunpowder was unsparingly used to destroy these and isolate the fabric, and although the church was very nearly touched at the south-eastern corner, it stood after the Fire was out unharmed. Lamb Building was burnt. North of the little graveyard wherein Oliver Goldsmith now lies every house was destroyed. The Exchequer Office was consumed. Even the lodges near the Thames-side had been caught by the flames. Leafless and blackened, wrecks of the fine trees then planted about King's Bench Walk swayed in the wind.

In Old Paper Buildings Selden had lodged, in rooms on the top floor with a gallery overlooking the gardens, and there he was visited, he tells delightfully in *Table Talk*, by "a lunatic person of quality, who came to my chambers in the Temple and told me he had two devils in his head." Old Paper Buildings escaped the flames.

Loss by the Fire, necessarily great in any circumstances, was aggravated by the fact that it occurred in Long Vacation, when many lawyers were away and their chambers locked. Lord Clarendon writes that "when the fire came where the lawyers had houses, as they had in many places, especially Serjeants Inn in Fleet Street, with that part of the Inner Temple that was next it and White Friars, there was scarce a man to whom those lodgings appertained who was in town; so that whatsoever was there, their money, books and papers, besides the evidences of many men's estates deposited in their hands, were all burnt or lost, to a very great value."

Across the highway the Fire received a check, being stopped at Fetter Lane corner under singular circumstances. "Its greediness was the cause of its own destruction," says an onlooker. The flames passed over some houses in Fleet Street, setting alight a wooden one that burnt with its neighbour, and were prevented from getting farther by the obstruction of a brick house. With this fortuitous help and the assistance of a few workers there was made a wide gap by the time the main body of the Fire had advanced.

The wind actually increased in violence this Tuesday evening, rising before it subsided. Fleet Street was reduced to ruins in a few hours, the flames being driven along with such impetuosity that there was despair of saving even the western end of the town. Of the large parish of St. Bride's, only sixteen houses in Great New Street, then a broad open place, were left standing. The panic spread to distant Westminster "Nothing

can be like the distraction we were in, but the Day of Judgment," wrote one afterwards. Buildings in the Strand were blown up with gunpowder in order to isolate Somerset House, the safety of which it was feared would be menaced. Lyenbergh, the Swedish Resident, fearful for his safety in Covent Garden, begged for a warrant to press four carts in which to save his goods. The fashionable residents of the Strand, having the benefit of the river, cleared the furniture from their houses into barges or any other vessels available, and despatched them upstream beyond reach of the Fire. Many dwellers on both sides of the Strand, not knowing whither to go, and scarcely conscious of what they did, fled with their families out into the streets, that they might not be within their houses when the flames fell upon them.

The Court was thrown into confusion. King Charles, anxious even for Whitehall, ordered that Sir John Denham's new buildings at Scotland Yard should be unroofed and "defaced," in order to check the Fire. Sir William Coventry, at St. James's, removed his goods, "as the King at Whitehall and everybody had done, and was doing," says Pepys. Clarendon turned out of Berkshire House, where he stayed while his great mansion in Piccadilly was building. "We who live in the suburbs, preparing for the same fate, fled from our lodgings, and have hardly yet recovered our goods or our wits," he wrote afterwards to Lord Winchilsea.

Nearer the danger, the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn razed to the ground a tavern in Chancery Lane called the St. John's Head, fearful lest a fire there might involve their property.

Hope was almost abandoned of saving anything from the flames when late on Tuesday night salvation came to London—to what remained of London—by the fall of the wind. At eleven o'clock messengers hastened to the Duke of York, imploring further assistance in men and tackle. They represented that there was a prospect of stopping the Fire, the wind having then slackened. The soldiers were exhausted after the heat and labour of the day, but the new turn of events, so long and anxiously awaited, revived the spirits of all. The wind veered to the south, and slowly its force decreased, as throughout the night the struggle was maintained, and still against fearful odds: in the Temple, north of Fleet Street, by the Fleet River to Holborn Bridge, about Cripplegate and the northern City Wall, and far distant as The Tower. At all these places bright flame leapt to the sky, but the biggest blaze was in the choked and inaccessible property lying north of Fleet Street.

Checked by Pie Corner, Smithfield, and at Holborn Bridge, where it passed the Fleet River, the Fire out of Newgate took a southerly course. St. Andrew Holborn thus escaped; this church, one of the most ancient in London, was already so dilapidated that in 1682 it was found necessary to pull it down. Only the lower portion of the old tower survives in Wren's rebuilding. The flames crossed Shoe Lane, leaving standing at their edge the old town house of the Bishop of Bangor (then used as poor tenements), a fragment of which remained till the early years of last century. The Fire there joined with that burning up from Fleet Street. In

Shoe Lane were rival resorts for entertainment of the town, the new cock-pit, of which Pepys gives an unpleasant account, and "a show called the Opera or Paradise," of which I know nothing save that its owner died of Plague in the previous year and the whole place was burnt out in the Fire. There, too, was claimed another victim. Paul Lowell, a watchmaker living in Shoe Lane behind the Globe Tavern, was eighty years of age, dull of hearing, and deaf to the admonition of his son and his friends, who warned him of his peril. The old man declared that he would never leave his house till it fell in upon him, and kept his word, for he sank with its ruins into the cellar, where afterwards his bones, together with his keys, were found.

Eastward, against the wind, the Fire had made slower progress. In the bend of Lime Street, flames coming up from Fenchurch Street destroyed Pewterers Hall, and the Company suffered the further loss of all their City house property save only a single alley. The larger part of the records were removed in time. Preserved from the Fire, and fixed in one of the windows of the present banqueting room, is an interesting relic, a representation of a spider and fly beneath a sundial, all on the same piece of glass. Its emblematical meaning has been the subject of much speculation.

St. Gabriel Fenchurch, standing out in the street, perished, and the Fire found its limits at Clothworkers Hall, Mincing Lane, which burnt for three days and nights in one body of flame, the cellar being full of oil. This was yet another Elizabethan structure lost to London, the Hall having been built in 1598 on land

which "the Sheermen of London" had obtained by gift in Henry VI's reign, after their amalgamation with the Fullers.

The Fire entered Tower Street on Tuesday. Pepys, going there in the afternoon with Sir William Penn, "met the fire burning three or four doors beyond Mr. Howell's, whose goods, poor man, his trays and dishes, shovels, etc., were flung all along Tower Street in the kennels, and people working therewith from one end to the other; the fire coming on in that narrow street, on both sides, with infinite fury." The labour brought little result. At night Pepys was again in Tower Street, when it was all on fire, flames burst out of the Trinity House, and the Dolphin Tavern opposite was alight.

The Custom House by the river, built by Queen Elizabeth to meet the wants of England's great age of expansion, was completely destroyed. The eastward Fire also consumed Bakers Hall, a building of much interest in Harp Lane, sometime the dwelling of John Chichele, Chamberlain of London in 1437, and acquired by the Bakers Company late in the fifteenth century. The loss of these, however, would have counted as nothing had once the Tower of London been involved in the circuit of the flames, for apart from its unique place among our national possessions, the fortress was, with almost incredible folly, being used as a storehouse for the Navy's gunpowder. Evelyn had a horrific vision of what might have happened had the magazine in the White Tower exploded as the culminating act in the Fire: "It would not only have beaten down and

destroyed all the bridge, but sunk and torn all the vessels in the river, and rendered the demolition beyond all expression for several miles about the country."

In fact, the powder had already been removed when the peril drew near, thanks to the energy of Sir John Robinson, the Lieutenant, and this danger at least averted. The goldsmiths' money and jewellery, valued on a rough estimate at no less than £1,200,000, were carried out to Whitehall. The Fire, destroying all Mincing Lane, established itself in the foot of Mark Lane, where houses were blown to pieces to save the rest, then burnt down to the Tower graff, before the Moat, alongside which were numbers of old timber dwellings. It did not, however, reach them, and they stood to be afterwards pulled down as a measure of precaution. The Tower was saved by the blowing up of houses along the street from Watergate, before the Fire came so far, thus enlarging the open space. A wine-shop and warehouse were demolished by powder in Seething Lane, to prevent the flames entering there.

The Fire after midnight on Tuesday came right up to Allhallows Barking Church, flames licking the stone walls and destroying the clock face on the tower. The parsonage house, immediately adjoining, was burnt to the ground. The Fire travelled no farther, and Allhallows Barking and the few houses beyond mark its extreme eastern limit. It appears from the churchwardens' accounts that the clock, chimes, and "dyall" were repaired for 20*s*. Pepys mentions injury to "part of the porch," but as there is no other entry of payment, it may be assumed that the 20*s*. represents all the damage

done. The old church, happily preserved intact, is historically the most interesting of those within the Fire area, though less known to Londoners, probably, than to Americans, with whom it is a place of pilgrimage by reason of its associations with Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST EMBERS

PEPYS, alarmed by the Fire's approach to Seething Lane, was astir before sunrise on Wednesday. The *Diary* may again be quoted for the spectacle that the City presented that day:

"About two in the morning my wife calls me up, and tells me of new cries of fire, it being come to Barking Church, which is the bottom of our lane. I up; and finding it so, resolved presently to take her away, and did, and took my gold, which was about £2,350, W. Hewer and Jane down by Proudy's boat to Woolwich; but Lord! what a sad sight it was by moonlight to see the whole City almost on fire, that you might see it as plain at Woolwich as if you were by it. There, when I came, I find the gates shut but no guard kept at all; which troubled me, because of discourses now begun, that there is a plot in it, and that the French had done it. I got the gates open, and to Mr. Sheldon's, where I locked up my gold; and charged my wife and W. Hewer never to leave the room without one of them in it, night or day. So back again, by the way seeing my goods well in the lighters at Deptford, and watched well by people. Home, and whereas I expected to have seen our house on fire, it now being seven o'clock,

it was not But to the fire, and there find greater hopes than I expected; for my confidence of finding our office on fire was such that I durst not ask anybody how it was, till I came and saw it was not burned. But, going to the fire, I find by the blowing up of houses, and the great help given by the workmen out of the King's yards, sent up by Sir W. Pen, there is a good stop given to it, as well at Mark Lane end as ours.

"I up to the top of Barking Steeple, and there saw the saddest sight of desolation that I ever saw; everywhere great fires, oil cellars and brimstone and other things burning. I became afraid to stay there long, and therefore down again as fast as I could, the fire being spread as far as I could see; and to Sir W. Pen's, and there ate a piece of cold meat, having eaten nothing since Sunday but the remains of Sunday's dinner. Here met with Mr. Young and Whistler; and having removed all my things, and received good hopes that the fire at our end is stopped, they and I walked into the town, and find Fenchurch Street, Gracious Street, and Lombard Street all in dust. The Exchange a sad sight, nothing standing there of all the statues and pillars but Sir Thomas Gresham's picture in the corner.

"Into Moorfields (our feet ready to burn walking through the town among the hot coals), and find that full of people, and poor wretches carrying their goods there, and everybody keeping his goods together by themselves; and a great blessing it is to them that it is fair weather for them to keep abroad night and day; drank there, and paid twopence for a plain penny loaf. Thence homeward, having passed through Cheapside

and Newgate Market, all burned, and seen Anthony Joyce's house on fire. I also did see a poor cat taken out of a hole in a chimney joining to the wall of the Exchange, with the hair all burned off the body and yet alive. So home at night and find there good hopes of saving our office; but great endeavours of watching all night, and having men ready; and so we lodged them in the office, and had drink and bread and cheese for them. And I lay down and slept a good night about midnight; though, when I rose, I heard that there had been a great alarm of French and Dutch being risen, which proved nothing."

The sight which Pepys beheld from the church tower of Allhallows Barking an hour or two after daybreak indicated that the Fire was exhausting its strength. "Great fires" there were in various places, so many that from a distance the whole City may have seemed alight; but with the fall of the wind the Fire of London had lost its capacity for large destruction. Pepys' venturesome walk into the burnt City this Wednesday, hot and difficult as it was, would have been impossible had that been otherwise. There was still a considerable body of flame along the City's western edge, burning noisily among the timber houses. The Duke of York was again in the streets at six o'clock. He found the Fire almost quenched on both sides of Fleet Street, but it spread towards Temple Bar on the south side till stopped near Inner Temple Gate, at the spot where long afterwards the Temple Exchange Coffee House flourished. St. Dunstan's Church, opposite, escaped unharmed, though in grave peril in the narrow street.

A corner house of Fetter Lane having been riven by gunpowder, the flames turned up that thoroughfare, to die down ultimately amid the destruction caused by the fire burning south from Holborn Bridge. They left standing in Fleet Street, just beyond Fetter Lane, two typical timber-framed dwellings, probably early Stuart, with balconies before the roof gables, that marked the limits to which the Fire burnt till their destruction in 1893.

A quiet haven by the corner, sheltered from the roar of the highway, maintains its ancient repose—Clifford's Inn. This is an old Inn of Chancery, sadly reduced of late years in area and picturesqueness. One seems there nearer to the Fire of London than at any other spot. A single house burnt—No. 13, the nearest to Fetter Lane—but grouped about are delightful old red-brick houses that were there while the flames raged. The row comprising Nos. 15 to 17, facing the little garden, dates from 1663; parts of No. 12, the oldest house in the Inn, from 1624; and Nos. 8 and 10, at the east end of the hall, are also of considerable antiquity. Clifford's Inn Hall, in which the Fire Judges sat to adjust claims, still stands.

The Liberty of the Rolls was at the Fire's edge. Little of the ancient House for Converted Jews, of Henry III's foundation, can then have survived save the Rolls Chapel, the chancel of which burnt, ignited presumably by flying sparks, for the mass of the Fire never reached so far. The chancel had gone in 1667, when Hollar's drawing indicates that a new wall had been built at the east end of the nave; and the injury done was confirmed when the fabric was finally demo-

lished in 1896, fragments of wrought stonework not later than the fifteenth century built into the wall bearing signs of having been exposed to fire. The public records in Charles II's reign were widely scattered, some being at The Tower, others at Westminster, but there was a large store of them at the Rolls Chapel, mostly legal documents. These were saved without loss. The gentleman in attendance upon the Duke of York, whose letter I have before cited, tells that his Royal Highness, being satisfied that the Fire in Fleet Street was well in hand, proceeded to the Rolls, "and put the people to work there to preserve the rolls, caused all people, men, women and children that were able to work to come, and to those who refused he beat them to it; by this means he got people to other places, as Fetter Lane, which he preserved by the assistance of some brick houses and garden walls; likewise Shoe Lane was preserved by the same way."

By the energy of all the Fire was put out, but not before several houses built upon the Rolls Gardens from Fetter Lane had been burnt down or demolished to prevent the flames spreading farther west. Dutch writers, with curious persistency, assert that Temple Bar, then an old timber-built structure with steep roof, red tiled, was itself burnt; by one account it was "reduced to ashes, all but the roof"—a topsy-turvy result, assuredly! There is no English record of this that I know.

There was less need on Wednesday to press the people to labour than at the earlier stages of the Fire. Its progress was at length decisively checked. The wind had fallen during the night to dead calm. In all except

a few scattered areas the flames were under control, and in these burnt with reduced force, dying away amid the ruins they had made. Legions of those who had flocked out of the City came back to assist in stamping out the last embers. "Now they begin to bestir themselves (writes Evelyn in his *Diary*), and not till now, who hitherto had stood as men intoxicated, with their hands across." Gunpowder was freely used in bringing down additional houses, and all about the Fire's edge the crack of explosions resounded. Fetter Lane for nearly one-half its length from Holborn was saved, the flames being stopped at the outlying burial ground of St. Dunstan's parish, a fragment of which survives at Bream's Buildings. They burnt along Dean Street on both sides. Nevill's Court was destroyed; three early Stuart timber houses there, belonging to the Goldsmiths Company, stood intact after the Fire had swept past and till our own time, protected by their large gardens—there are gardens still before the houses of this City byway. The conventicle which afterwards became the Moravian Chapel also was spared.

In the course of the morning the Fire was put out in Shoe Lane, and by noon was quenched at Holborn Bridge. It then broke out afresh in Cow Lane, Smithfield, where Alderman Sir Richard Browne, the stout Parliamentary General turned Royalist, with a party of the Trained Bands, toiled amid the heat till its extinction, having Lord Craven to help him. The whole city of ruins that day was befogged. Smoke rose in clouds from the smouldering contents of burnt warehouses, and having no wind to disperse it, hovered low

A most troublesome and dangerous fire, involving great destruction, still raged about Cripplegate, and taxed the utmost energies of those pressed into the work of fighting it, reinforced though they were by troops and seamen relieved from duty in other parts of the City. It burnt throughout the entire day, and the night was far advanced before it was under. The Lord Mayor, Sir Thomas Bludworth, came out of the obscurity to which he had been relegated since his failure on Sunday, and with laudable energy superintended the pulling down of great numbers of houses to check its progress. Lord Manchester, Lord Ashley, and other Lords of the Council rode about the streets, having pipes opened wherever a supply of water was available, and powder brought up to assist the demolitions. The Duke of York spent several hours at Cripplegate. The King joined his brother there. "I was no eye-witness," says Rolle, "but I have been informed that when the Fire came to Cripplegate His Majesty Charles II, being then and there present, did in his own person take great pains (in no less, as was told, than if he had been a poor labourer) to promote the extinction of it." [1] Many actual eye-witnesses whom I have quoted in an earlier chapter have testified to the King's activity.

The Fire burnt to the City Wall, making no inconsiderable addition to the damage already done to London. John Milton lies buried in St. Giles Cripplegate, the ancient and historical church standing outside the gate, which bears in the basement of its tower some few

[1] Samuel Rolle, *London's Resurrection*, 1668.

traces of the still earlier church of Alfun. St. Giles's wholly escaped, thanks to its isolation. Within the City Wall the flames found fresh fuel in the dense property which packed close up to it, and here amid the dwellings three additional halls of City Companies were destroyed, and a fourth greatly injured. Curriers Hall, which stood against the wall, was an Elizabethan building. The Fire consumed the hall itself, the Company's records, and presumably the plate as well, for nothing is found prior to 1666. Plaisterers Hall, in Addle Street (the Company lost all its City property save one alley), and Brewers Hall, near by, met with a like fate.

Elsyng Spital had been founded early in the fourteenth century, a little east of Cripplegate, by the pious charity of William Elsyng, for the glory of God, the good of his soul, and the relief of one hundred poor men, by choice those who were blind. When the Fire came, and passed, the brothers' chapel survived as the parish church of St. Alphage. The tower stands to-day, though concealed from view, and to the belfry stage (above which it has been rebuilt) is the only remaining fragment of any mediæval hospital left in London. The flames burnt close around, but the church was unharmed. Elsewhere on the Spital grounds stood Sion College, built forty years before the Great Fire by the executors of Dr. Thomas White, vicar of St. Dunstan-in-the-West, for a gild or fraternity which was to consist of all the clergy of London. The College hall, library, offices, almshouses, and students' chambers —all were destroyed. Its particular pride was a valuable

collection of books, as became a company of learned clerks, ranged in a long library, which John Sympson, rector of St. Olave Hart Street, had added at his own expense. A despairing effort was made to save these books, a considerable portion being removed to the Charterhouse, not, however, before at least one-third had been consumed or hopelessly spoilt. The almsfolk found safe refuge in the church.

West of the gate the Cripplegate fire spread to Barber Surgeons Hall, in Monkwell Street, burning a vast deal there, though much was saved. We owe the preservation of Holbein's great picture of the grant by Henry VIII of the charter to the Barber Surgeons Company to the foresight of one Major Brooks, who when the flames drew near removed it to a place of safety. It is curious to know that Pepys, having an eye to a bargain, hesitated to give £200 for the immortal work—

Aug. 28, 1668.—Harris [the actor] and I to Chyrurgeons Hall, where they are building it new very fine; and there to see their Theatre, which stood all the Fire, and (which was our business) their great picture of Holbein's, thinking to have bought it; I did think to give £200 for it, it being said to be worth £1000, but it is so spoiled that I have no mind to it, and it is not a pleasant though a good picture.

No trace of the damage that Pepys mentions is visible to-day. The surgeons' theatre, "which stood all the Fire," was a detached building, erected by Inigo Jones about the year 1636. Walpole deemed it one of the best examples of the famous architect's work; its interior

has been made familiar by a gruesome print by Hogarth. Fire actually caught the roof of the theatre, whereupon a seaman climbed up and beat the flames out. The Company's Hall seems to have been largely destroyed. The old Court Room is still in use. Most of the writings were carried out to Moorfields, but the minutes of 1666 have been lost, and the Company has no records of the Great Fire save the wardens' accounts. Various skeletons of criminals, turned over for dissection by the surgeons after execution at Tyburn, and two stuffed human figures, popularly known as "Adam and Eve," were also among the salvage.

Flames burning through Aldersgate and at London Wall alarmed the few noble families who still dwelt in the City at Aldersgate Street. The Countess of Thanet fled out of London, having given orders for her house to be emptied. "I thank God," she wrote to the Dowager Countess of Pembroke at Skipton Castle, "I came well last night to Stamford, and we are all very well; and I hear it confirmed that Thanet House is safe from the fire, and likewise Aldersgate Street, the nearest that it came to my house was Surgeons Hall, on the backside my garden, which is burnt to the ground. Whether I have a bed left at Thanet House or no I do not know. Lord Hatton doth confirm that all is burnt from Pudding Lane that is near the Bear at the Bridge foot to Temple Bar. I have sent a man up to London to Fotherby, that if my beds be carried out of the house to get some of them in again, for it is dangerous lodging for the plague and small-pox, and scarcely any lodging to be had."

This fourth day of the Fire did not pass without fresh alarms. The last live embers about The Tower and the foot of Mark Lane were beaten down late in the afternoon; but at night the ruins of Shoe Lane broke into flame, and there was a violent outburst at Cripplegate, again lighting the red glare in the sky.

The most serious outbreak occurred that night in the Temple, sparks from the still smouldering houses in King's Bench Walk having become lodged on some timber buildings. These last were brought to the ground by gunpowder, but the flames were in dangerous proximity to Inner Temple Hall. Before this second fire was out what little remained standing of Inner Temple was mostly destroyed by flames and powder. The Duke of York, himself a bencher of the Inn, hurried down to the Temple on receiving the message, and remained there directing operations till one o'clock in the morning, when all danger was over. He found on arrival a crowd of people clamouring at the gates, but the lawyers refused to let them enter, fearing, with good reason, that the Inn would lose more by looting than gain by help.

Gunpowder was used unsparingly, and probably greater damage was done by its means than by the new fire. There occurred one of those farcical incidents sometimes inseparable from grim tragedy. "The Duke of York (says Wind. Sandys, the gentleman who attended him) found no way of saving the Temple Chapel, and the Hall by the Chapel, but blowing up the Paper house in that court, which experiment, if it had been used at first, might have saved a great many houses. One

of the Templars, seeing gunpowder brought, came to the Duke and told him it was against the rules and charter of the Temple that any should blow that house with gunpowder, upon which Mr. Germaine, the Duke's Master of the Horse, took a good cudgel and beat the young lawyer to the purpose. There is no hopes of knowing who this lawyer is, but the hope that he will bring an action of battery against Mr. Germaine."

The ancient hall of Inner Temple was a precious relic of the past. The Knights Templars had themselves raised its walls, within which took place their ceremonies and feasts. A few remains still exist in an underground vault. It was gravely menaced by the flames, and despite the shattering of the neighbouring houses one end of the roof caught fire. A seaman named Richard Rowe with great agility climbed the roof, and, sitting astride the ridge, beat the flames out. His exploit, which saved the building, was celebrated in Crouch's contemporary verse—

When after one dayes rest The Temple smokes,
And with fresh fires and fears the Strand provokes,
But with good Conduct all was slak'd that night
By one more valiant than a Templar Knight.
Here a brisk rumour of afrighted gold
Sent hundreds in ; more Covetous than bold.
But a brave Seaman up the Tyles did skip
As nimbly as the Cordage of a Ship.
Bestrides the singed Hall on its highest ridge
Moving as if he were on London Bridge,
Or on the Narrow of a Skullers keel:
Feels neither head nor heart nor spirits reel.

The Benchers rewarded the intrepid seaman with

a gift of £10 for his services A gift of £2 was also made to a soldier from Kingston who helped. Either in the night fire or that which preceded it—one cannot distinguish—Inner Temple suffered additional loss by the destruction of the whole of the buildings upon the site now covered by the library, the class-rooms, the Parliament Chamber, with the offices below, and also Tanfield Court; and a part of Fig Tree Court was blown up by gunpowder. The lawyers' loss was bitter, indeed. A skeleton, and barely that, remained of all their widespread property.

This was the Fire's expiring effort, though at dawn Pepys was called up to lead the Navy men to an isolated fire in Bishopsgate, where none had previously been. He has etched for us the last scene of the Great Fire, the women hard at work in the street kennels sweeping away the water; "then they would scold for drink, and be as drunk as devils. I saw good butts of sugar broken open in the street, and people give and take handfulls out, and put into beer, and drink it." We leave the *Diary*, invaluable as it has been for its many personal touches, where Pepys takes boat to view the desolation below and above bridge, "and so to Westminster, thinking to shift myself, being all dirt from top to bottom." "A sad sight," he moralizes, "to see how the river looks; no houses nor church near it, to the Temple, where it stopped." Nights thereafter he slept uneasily, "much terrified with dreams of fire and falling down of houses."

The Great Fire of London, having burnt four days and nights, was out when the sun on Thursday rose

high over the still smoking city, and the exhausted people were able to take rest. They had begun to lose count of the days, and with so much to do, so much excitement and so little sleep, it seemed a week or more since their troubles began. The Fire died down almost as rapidly as it had risen. "A fire such as had not been known in Europe since the conflagration of Rome under Nero," in Macaulay's phrase, was at last conquered. No human effort alone could have subdued it under the conditions in which it raged throughout Monday and Tuesday, and only the providential fall of the wind on Tuesday night enabled its progress to be stayed. Little wonder that men of religious mind saw in this the direct intervention of the Divine Will, as if in mercy staying the flames with the command, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." That was the burden of countless sermons, and of printed exhortations, appeals and homilies to which the Fire of London gave rise.

The Fire was out, and a first comprehensive sight of the devastated City disclosed no majesty of ruins, but—dirt! It lay out everywhere, lying thickly about the stumps of walls and heaps of what had been houses: black dirt in the form of powdered charcoal, white and black dirt from fire-riven and calcined stones, brown dirt and yellow dirt from bricks, detritus of every source and colour deposited by the wind over the whole City and westward over Westminster, a layer left as though by a receding tide. In places it was inches thick where eddies of hot air-currents had circled. Every errant puff of wind sent the top layer of the myriads of atoms

dancing. Tons of solid matter, disintegrated and changed in the intense heat of the flames, had been moved unseen. Never was there such a task of clearing up as London offered after the Fire.

Thousands of homeless citizens were in distress, camped with the goods they had salved in the open fields around London. They had escaped the flames, but were in danger of famine. Immense quantities of provisions had been consumed in the burnt houses, not being worth removal at the extortionate rates charged for cartage. In addition, the bakers, brewers and others who inhabited the unburnt parts of the town had forsaken their shops, carrying away all that was portable, and lacked the confidence or wit to return at once and fall to their occupations. In large areas spared by the fire, as well as in the fields, the people were for many hours without food. The King on Wednesday issued two Royal Proclamations for their relief.

These commanded the magistrates and deputy-lieutenants in counties whence provisions were chiefly derived personally to see that as great quantities of provisions as could possibly be furnished be daily and constantly sent to London, especially of bread. For their sale and distribution markets were to be kept at Bishopsgate, at Tower Hill, and at Smithfield each day; the wants of those refugees who had gone farther afield were to be served by the appointment of temporary markets at Clerkenwell, Islington, Finsbury Fields, Mile End Green, and Ratcliffe. All persons concerned were to resort to such places, "We having taken care,"

says the Proclamation, "to secure the said markets in safety, and prevent all disturbances by the refusal of payment for goods or otherwise."

Large numbers of distressed persons having preserved their goods, but not knowing how to dispose of them, it was his Majesty's pleasure that all churches, chapels, schools and other like public places should be open freely to receive such goods as might be brought to them, and the justices of Middlesex, Essex, and Surrey were commanded to see that this be done.

All cities and towns whatsoever were required, without any contradiction, to receive distressed refugees from London, and to permit them the free exercise of their manual trades, the King pledging his Royal word that when the present exigency should have passed he would take care and order that none of such persons should be a burden to the respective towns and parishes.

Thanks to the ample charity extended by all the outlying places and residents within the suburbs to ameliorate the lot of the unhappy Londoners these first steps were successful in meeting the immediate distress, and there was no real shortage of food The King sent biscuit from the Navy into Moorfields, but the people there, being already supplied and unaccustomed to such hard fare, made no use of it.

The King himself rode out to Moorfields on Thursday (September 6) and addressed the homeless citizens gathered there. It is not difficult to reconstruct the scene: the grass fields littered with goods that had been brought out of the flaming streets; for a background the City in ashes, the grey north Wall erect and straight,

and St. Paul's the dominating ruin of a vast aggregation of ruins; the people, rich and poor, mingled together and united in a common calamity which shattered distinctions; and over all the blue sky of a summer day. A few gentlemen attended the King. He spoke from horseback, seeking to allay the anguish and alarm that were visible in the upturned faces around him. He told the people that the judgment which had fallen upon London was immediately from the hand of God, and that no plot by Frenchmen or Dutchmen or Papists had any part in bringing upon them so much misery. Many of those who had been detained upon suspicion he had himself examined. He assured the citizens that he found no reason to suspect connivance in burning the City. He desired the Londoners to take no more alarm; he had strength enough to defend them from any enemy, and assured them that he, their King, would, by the grace of God, live and die with them, and he would take a particular care of them all.

Out of the exhausted inferno ominous wisps of smoke were still rising. "I can say but this," wrote a member of Lincoln's Inn, describing the havoc, "that there is nothing but stones and rubbish, and all exposed to the open air, so that you may see from one end of the City almost to the other. You can compare London (were it not for the rubbish) to nothing more than an open field." To another onlooker the sight of devastated London brought reminder of the broad expanses of his native Westmoreland. "The houses are laid so flat to the ground that the city looks just like our fells, for there is nothing to be seen but heaps of stones.

It was long before the full extent of the calamity could be made known, after a complete survey of the ruins. The table given by Jonas Moore and Ralph Gatrix, the City Surveyors, needs no comment. This was the destruction wrought and the area saved—

273 acres burnt within the walls, and
63 acres 3 roods without the walls.
87 parish churches, besides chapels burnt.
13,200 houses burnt in over 400 streets and courts.
75 acres 3 roods still standing within the walls unburnt.
11 parishes without the walls yet standing.

In rough computation, the flames destroyed an area equal to an oblong with its greatest length a mile and a half, and in depth half a mile. This does not overestimate the destruction. Nathanial Hardy, preaching at St. Olave Hart Street, used a quaintly bookish phrase, describing the City as reduced from a volume of large folio to a decimotertio.

Dead calm succeeded the violence of the wind, and no further extension of the Fire was to be feared; but work remained to be done both on Thursday and Friday in beating down flames wherever they gained a new head, as happened in many places. A detachment of two hundred soldiers was brought to London from Hertfordshire, with carts laden with pickaxes, spades, and buckets, to prevent any further outbreak and afford relief, all hands being wearied with the labour. Similar aid was obtained from Kent, Middlesex, and Surrey, relieved by fresh bands day by day. The King on

Sunday warned the Aldermen that there was still much combustible material about the City, bavins, faggots, and the like, bearing sparks. They were to order the owners to remove it, failing compliance to move it themselves, and meanwhile to have a good watch kept.

This first Sunday after the Fire the people camped about the City's edge crowded into the surviving churches. But one was standing where there had been from five to six a week before. Pepys attended worship at his parish church of St. Olave Hart Street. "Our parson," he jots in the *Diary*, "made a melancholy but good sermon; and many and most in the church cried, specially the women. The church mighty full; but few of fashion, and most strangers." The first rain of this fateful week fell that day.

Alarms were frequent over London for weeks afterwards, small fires continuing to burn unchecked in unopened cellars and dismantled warehouses, and places wherein coal, oil, and other inflammable goods were lodged. A newsletter, dated Sept. 29, records that on some warehouses about St. Paul's, which it was hoped were secure, being opened the goods broke into fresh flame and were consumed. Aubrey, passing the corner of Holborn Bridge on Nov. 30, saw a cellar of coals opened by labourers, "and there were burning coals which burnt ever since the Great Fire; but being pent so close for air there was very little waste."

A deluge of rain occurred in October, descending almost unceasingly for ten days, but it failed to put out all the fires. Pepys made many entries in his *Diary* of the continuance of these spasmodic outbreaks:—

Dec. 1, 1666.—Walking to the Old Swan, I did see a cellar in Tower Street in a very fresh fire, the late great winds having blown it up. It seemed to be only of logwood, that hath kept the fire all this while in it.

Dec. 14.—By coach to Whitehall, seeing many smokes of the fire by the way yet.

Jan. 17, 1667.—I observe still, in many places, the smoking remains of the late fire; the ways mighty bad and dirty.

March 16.—The weather is now grown warm again, after much cold; and it is observable that within these eight days I did see smoke remaining, coming out of some cellars, from the late great fire, now above six months since.

A knighthood was granted by King Charles to Edmund Berry Godfrey, who was a Justice of the Peace for Westminster—the Protestant magistrate before whom Tonge and Oates first laid information of the famous "Popish Plot," and whose body was thereafter found on Primrose Hill run through with his own rapier. Godfrey received from his Sovereign this honour and a gift of plate (the Edmund Berry Godfrey cup) and public acknowledgment of his eminent service done in helping to suppress the Fire, but no others among the band of workers who had toiled so hard to save what was left of London obtained Royal reward.

"The dreadful fire" it is called on almost every one of the memorial stones that mark the sites of ruined churches, "the lamentable and dismal fire" in Acts of Parliament and other documents. The term "Great

Fire" I found first officially used in a Royal Warrant for rebuilding the burnt Customs House, but it was not till many years later that the now universal name was generally adopted.

The Fire took a remarkably small toll of deaths. What the actual numbers were has never been ascertained. Burnet, whose sources of information were obviously incomplete, could not learn that any one person was either burnt or trodden to death. The King, he says, was never observed to be so much struck with anything in his whole life as with this. The *London Gazette* also asserts that no lives were lost. Eight is the largest estimate of deaths directly due to the flames.

The published Bills of Mortality indicate a death-roll of six; but I cannot believe that these represent the actual total. Evelyn, walking amid the ruins, noticed "the stench that came from some poor creatures' bodies."

In these pages three deaths have been mentioned —Farynor's maid-servant; the aged woman whose charred remains were seen by Taswell by the Cathedral; and Paul Lowell, the Shoe Lane watchmaker. A fourth victim was an old man, who incautiously went to St. Paul's to save a blanket he had placed there, and being weak, the Fire overcame him. Others had sunk into vaults since the Fire, as they were searching the ruins of their houses. The church books of St. Botolph Aldgate record the burial of a parishioner who dropped dead on Tower Hill during the Fire, "being ffrighted."

The ruined city continued to be most dangerous

by reason of concealed fires. In the burial register of St. Mary Woolnoth is an entry so late as the 18th October: "Richard Yrde, late of this Parish, being stifled in a house of office backside of deputie Canhams house, after the Cittie was burnt."

In view of the large numbers of invalids who were hastily removed from the houses and carried by boat upon the river or by carts and litters along the rough and choked streets, of pregnant women, and of the sick and frail who underwent days and nights of exposure in the open fields, it is to be feared that the deaths attributable in a secondary degree to the Great Fire of London must be estimated, not by the half-dozen, but by the hundred. One case is well known. Shirley, the poet, and his wife were driven by the flames from the house they occupied in Fleet Street, near Serjeants Inn, and forced to take refuge with crowds of other outcasts in St. Giles's-in-the-Fields. The hardships they endured and the terror of the scenes witnessed brought on mortal illness, and the poet and his wife, dying on the same day, were buried in one grave (October 29th) in the parish churchyard there.

CHAPTER X

AMID THE RUINS

SOUCHU DE RENNEFORT, a French traveller, has left in a few words a vivid impression of the ruins of London.[1] He had sailed the world as far away as the East Indies, landed at the Island of Madagascar, and on the voyage home he fell a hostage in the war which Charles II was waging with the French King. His ship was captured by a stout Englishman, and himself held close prisoner for many weary months in the Isle of Wight. Liberated at last, he came to the capital, via Southampton and Winchester, and he first touched London at that magnificent mansion which Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and Lord Chancellor of England, had built for himself on its extreme outskirts, where now is Piccadilly. Its isolated splendour impressed him, and he recalled its origin—built, so the Chancellor's enemies maliciously asserted, out of the money Hyde received for the sale of Dunkirk. "They call it 'The Little Dunkirk,' " he learnt.

But there was much else to impress the traveller in this first sight of London. Not far away was St. James's Palace, the residence of the Duke of York.

[1] Souchu de Rennefort, *Relation du Premier Voyage de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales en l'Isle de Madegascar ou Dauphine*, Paris, 1668.

From the high ground of Piccadilly he overlooked its park, and the lawns and woodlands enforced his admiration. "It forms the most beautiful walk in London." Westminster and Whitehall—which he compares with the Louvre—loomed up massively beyond. He turned his horse down by the Royal Mews at Charing Cross and entered the Strand, passing Somerset House, where lived the Queen-Mother. The spaciousness of the Strand he remarks upon, lined as he found it with the private houses of Ambassadors. The street ended at Temple Bar, where the City commenced. Once through that gateway, the tragedy of the Great Fire burst upon him.

Thirty houses of Fleet Street were standing—thirty upon the two sides, and no more, forming of themselves a short lane abruptly terminated by ruins. Beyond this the eye saw nothing but widespread desolation.

A city swept by a cyclone of unimaginable fury would not have been levelled more effectively. Down the slight descent to where the Fleet River crossed the open panorama, up the rise to Ludgate and the city vaguely outlined beyond, and from the Thames-side sweeping wide across the traveller's path, the vision of London began and ended with ruins. Only where the northern road of Holborn made an entry by Newgate was there a bordering line of houses still erect. Souchu de Rennefort had passed the approaches—the Royal Palaces and parks, the capacious Strand, the stately mansions. This was the blackened city at which his world travels were to end!

Of course, he saw more, but he gives little detail.

With his eye he measured the devastated area, lying out two miles in length, and reaching back a mile from the Thames to Moorfields; and his estimate is wrong. To-day, where for some big new building scheme a block of houses has been laid low, and the vacant ground lies levelled, covered by loose bricks and rubbish and foundations awaiting removal, we know how desolate it looks, framed in by surrounding buildings. (I have St. Martin's-le-Grand in mind as I write.) Like this, but enlarged a thousand times, was the traveller's view of London.

Two matters especially arrested his attention—the first trifling. "There is not a single house complete (he writes), only small huts, or cabins, of the beer-sellers, which are open for the refreshment of labourers who walk from the suburbs into the City." These structures, hastily put together, stood all about the fire-swept area. He noticed that the towers and steeples, those of ninety parishes, were still upstanding, gaunt sentinels marking the ruined churches consumed by the flames. Others, too, had had their imagination stirred by this most impressive feature of the ruins. "I came directly," says the writer of a letter on September 6th, "from Aldgate to Holborn over the places burnt, by direction of the Steeples remaining this day."

One sight in the desolated City was awesome.

"The great church called St. Paul's retains nothing of its former shape, except the open roof and the windows, and all the stonework has been injured by the great fire." Four Corinthian columns of Inigo Jones's immense portico at the cathedral's west door upheld,

sixty-six feet aloft, the architrave on which this inscription was legible to all passers-by:—

CAROLVS. D. G. MAG. BRIT. FRAN. ET. HIB.
REX. F. D. TEMPLVM.
SANCTI. PAVLI. VETVSTATE. CONSVMPTVM.
RESTITVIT. PORTICVM. FECIT.

The King who raised this memorial to the transient glories of his Royalty lay dead, his reign ended by the stroke of the headsman's axe, and high above his capital lying in ashes the letters were preserved out of the flames, perfect where so much else had been mutilated or destroyed. Not one letter had been defaced.

John Evelyn, the diarist, had laboured in London during the height of the Fire, being entrusted by the King with the task of assisting to keep the flames from Holborn. As soon as it was out he hurried through the streets to view the desolation wrought—

"I went this morning (Friday, September 7th) on foot from Whitehall as far as London Bridge, through the late Fleet Street, Ludgate Hill by St. Paul's, Cheapside, Exchange, Bishopsgate, Aldersgate, and out to Moorfields, thence through Cornhill, etc., with extraordinary difficulty, clambering over heaps of yet smoking rubbish, and frequently mistaking where I was: the ground under my feet so hot that it even burnt the soles of my shoes.

"I was infinitely concerned to find that goodly church, St. Paul's, now a sad ruin, and that beautiful portico

(for structure comparable to any in Europe, as not long before repaired by the late King) now rent in pieces. The ruins of the vaulted roof falling, broke into St. Faith's. Thus lay in ashes that most venerable church, one of the most ancient pieces of early piety in the Christian world, besides near one hundred more. The lead, iron-work, bells, plate, etc., melted, the exquisitely wrought Mercers Chapel, the sumptuous Exchange, the august fabric of Christ Church, all the rest of the Companies' Halls, splendid buildings, arches, entries, all in dust; the fountains dried up and ruined, whilst the very waters remained boiling; the voragos of subterranean cellars, wells, and dungeons, formerly warehouses, still burning in stench and dark clouds of smoke; so that in five or six miles traversing about it I did not see one load of timber unconsumed, nor many stones but what were calcined white as snow.

"The people, who now walked about the ruins, appeared like men in some dismal desert, or rather, in some great city laid waste by a cruel enemy; to which was added the stench that came from some poor creatures' bodies, beds, and other combustible goods.

"Vast iron chains of the City streets, hinges, bars, and gates of prisons were many of them melted and reduced to cinders by the vehement heat. Nor was I yet able to pass through any of the narrow streets, but kept the widest; the ground and air, smoke and fiery vapour, continued so intense that my hair was almost singed, and my feet unsufferably surbated. The by-lanes and narrow streets were quite filled up with rubbish; nor could one have possibly known where he was, but

by the ruins of some church, or hall, that had some remarkable tower or pinnacle remaining.

"I then went towards Islington and Highgate, where one might have seen 200,000 people of all ranks and degrees dispersed, and lying along by their heaps of what they could save from the fire, deploring their loss; and, though ready to perish for hunger and destitution, yet not asking one penny for relief, which to me appeared a stranger sight than any I had yet beheld. His Majesty and Council, indeed, took all imaginable care for their relief, by Proclamation for the country to come in and refresh them with provisions.

"In the midst of all this calamity and confusion there was, I know not how, an alarm begun that the French and Dutch, with whom we were now in hostility, were not only landed, but even entering the City. There was, in truth, some days before great suspicion of those two nations joining; and now that they had been the occasion of firing the town. This report did so terrify, that on a sudden there was such an uproar and tumult that they ran away from their goods, and taking what weapons they could come at, they could not be stopped from falling on some of those nations whom they casually met, without sense or reason. The clamour and peril grew so excessive that it made the whole Court amazed, and they did with infinite pains and great difficulty reduce and appease the people, sending troops of soldiers and guards to cause them to retire into the fields again, where they were watched all this night. I left them pretty quiet, and came home sufficiently weary and broken. Their spirits thus a little calmed, and the

affright abated, they now began to repair into the suburbs about the City, where such as had friends or opportunity got shelter for the present; to which his Majesty's Proclamation also invited them."

The City's true centre is that restless area before the Mansion House, which until the subway was burrowed underneath had evil notoriety as the most dangerous street crossing in London. The citizen of the Restoration knew it as the Stocks Market for flesh and fish, a place noisy with the cries of the dealers. Stalls and shambles occupied the ground which the Lord Mayor's windows now overlook, a thin line of traffic passing at the head into the many highways that radiate from this spot.

A spectator brought up here after the Fire had five ruined churches immediately at his hand.

St. Christopher-le-Stocks was burnt out; the tower and walls stood, and did some service when Wren built a new church, itself destined to be demolished in 1780. Many have known the pretty garden court of the Bank of England, planted with shrubs and gaily coloured flowers, amidst which a fountain played? That was the churchyard of St. Christopher-le-Stocks. The last interment there was of one Jenkins, a Bank clerk. He stood seven feet six inches high, and his burial was allowed within the Bank in order to defeat the body snatchers. Till the reconstruction, the drawing office covered the site of the church. The Lord Mayor's stocks, wherein many a vagrom man had been held fast by the legs, were placed before this church.

Another of these Bank of England sites may opportunely be recalled. The office for changing notes occupied the ground where till the Fire had stood the house of the parish squire, and the courtyard left open at the side was his courtyard.

St. Mildred Poultry church, at Poultry's eastern end, perished in the Fire; and its successor, conspicuous by its tower, surmounted by a gilt ship in full sail, has since perished.

St. Stephen Walbrook, a near neighbour, suffered severely, though the bells rang in the tower after the flames had passed;[1] to this day there hangs in the new steeple one of the original bells cast by Robert Mot, who established about 1570 the foundry at Whitechapel still carried on by Messrs. Mears and Stainbank. The rebuilding gave opportunity to Sir Christopher Wren for what is recognized by architects as the most distinguished of all his City churches. The structure burnt was larger than Wren's magnificent fabric. It had been erected in the year 1439 by the great merchant family of Chichele, displacing an older church built on the opposite bank where the Walbrook stream had trickled through the City down to the Thames.

St. Mary Woolchurch Hawe, fourth of the churches about the Stocks Market, stood out in picturesque

[1] Rugge's *Diurnal*. Four of Mot's bells out of a ring of six are in the peal at St. Andrew Undershaft, one of the City churches that escaped the Fire; a fifth is at St. Andrew Holborn, in the Liberties; a sixth at St. Clement Danes, just outside the City boundary; and there are two examples of the master founder's work at Westminster Abbey, both of them elaborately and fancifully decorated.

desolation, its shaking ruins being dangerous to passers-by. They were removed in February, 1668, and the materials used in the restoration of St. Mary Woolnoth. This last church had suffered least of the group in the Fire. Gay flags maintained by the Goldsmiths Company over the tomb of that stout Elizabethan Knight, Sir Martyn Bowes, as provided under his will, were all charred; the steeple was not burnt, and the walls, save on the north side, were patched together, but the building survived only half a century longer.[1] The principal charge for repairs was advanced by Sir Robert Vyner, whose remembrance rests less upon this pious work than upon a well-meant, if unfortunate act of loyalty The story has run with a ripple of laughter.

A fine, new, larger Stocks Market was determined upon, the site of the church and graveyard of St. Mary Woolchurch being thrown into it. Thus the market after the Fire occupied ground now completely covered by the Mansion House and its western approach. What more befitting so central a position than a statue raised to the greatness of Charles II? It chanced that John Sobiesky, King of Poland, having slaughtered a vast number of Turks and saved Vienna, his ambassador in England ordered an equestrian statue commemorative of the victory, and this, failing payment to the sculptor, lay boxed up on the Tower Wharf, awaiting exportation. Vyner purchased the statue, and disregarding the incon-

[1] Nicholas Hawksmoor's present church of St. Mary Woolnoth, which by reason of its situation by the Mansion House and the Royal Exchange and its open site is the most conspicuous of all the City churches, was consecrated on Easter Day, 1727.

gruities of costume, had the head of the Polish King replaced by that of Charles II, and the features of the Turk lying prostrate under his horse's feet altered to those of Oliver Cromwell. Thus manœuvred, the statue arose on this spot in honour of the Sovereign! It was dedicated in the year of Vyner's Mayoralty Walpole says that Latham carved the head of King Charles. There is not the least doubt about the story, which the Oriental attire and headdress of the betrampled Cromwell fully bear out. The statue kept its place until the removal of the Stocks Market to the present Farringdon Street, in 1736, when the City fathers were puzzled to know what to do with it. Laid aside for some years, it was presented by the Common Council in 1779 to Robert Vyner, a descendant of the loyal Lord Mayor, and was by him removed to his country residence, and to-day is at Newby Hall, Ripon, the Yorkshire seat of the Vyner family.

A lampooner wrote these lines some years after the erection of the statue—

Could Robert Vyner have foreseen
The glorious triumph of his master,
The Wool Church Statue gold had been,
Which is now made of alabaster.
But wise men think had it been wood,
'Twere for a bankrupt King too good.
Those that the fabric well consider
Do of it diversely discourse,
Some pass their censure on the rider,
Others their judgment on the horse;
Most say the steed's a goodly thing,
But all agree 'tis a lewd King.

Down Walbrook, the clearance of the ruins disclosed the burial vault of the family of Pollefexen. The mansion above (site now covered by Walbrook House, No. 37) had been destroyed in the Fire—and using the word "above" I do so literally, for, strange as it may seem, the custom of this ancient family had been to bury their dead beneath their City dwelling. The house burnt was very old, possibly preserving part of the actual residence of the Abbots of Tortington. On the wall of the vault was found a stone tablet bearing an inscription which may be read thus:

> Who lies here? Who don't ken
> The family of Pollefexen,
> Who be they living or be they dead
> Like their own house over their head,
> That whensoever their Saviour come
> They always may be found at home.

Henry Pollefexen rebuilt the house of his ancestors He was knighted, and became Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas late in Charles II's reign.

The five churches I have recalled marked the five highways which merged at the Stocks Market, and all the roads lay in ruins: Walbrook to the Thames, the Poultry and Cheapside westward, to where the Cathedral's roofless walls and gaunt windows, the blue sky showing through, obstructed further vision; and Lombard Street, Cornhill, and Threadneedle Street towards the east. In these long vistas of ruined London the churches were pathetic objects. Rolle describes them, "the outsides yet standing, their walls and steeples make such a fair show, that they who should view them at a distance

would think they were just as before. But alas! their insides are gone; they are fit for no use." The fire-riven fabrics stood, but so frail and brittle were they that draymen were loth to pass them on a windy day, for fear of loosened masonry descending upon their heads.

The picture of desolation was the same in whatever direction the eye turned, till in the distance upstanding houses and the few churches and Companies' Halls that survived marked the limits to which the flames burnt. It is enough to recall that phrase written by Alexander Fleming from London to his brother in the country—"You may stand where Cheapside was, and see the Thames." You might have stood in Cheapside and watched the boats passing on the river.

London rose out of its ashes after the Fire, not by the building of continuous streets in any part, but first here a house and there a house. Others by degrees were joined, until at last single houses were united into whole streets, and the closely built streets again became a City. The undertaking was a stupendous one, and necessarily it made slow progress, with many setbacks. I am at a loss to understand the inscription on the south side of the Monument, where it states, "London rises again, whether with greater speed or greater magnificence is doubtful, three short years complete that which was considered the work of an age." It is a stupid boast. It does not represent the facts, and they must have been well known when the words were cut.

An amiable conspiracy by historians of the succeeding century has represented the London citizens as supermen, achieving the impossible. Oldmixon has remarked that "To the amazement of all Europe, London was, in four years' time, rebuilt with so much beauty and magnificence that they who saw it in both states, before and after the Fire, could not reflect on it without wondering where the wealth could be found to bear so vast a loss as was made by the Fire, and so prodigious an expense as was laid out in the rebuilding." Seymour, but a trifle more modest, says the City was wellnigh rebuilt in the space of four or five years. A single fact may be set against these claims. St. Bartholomew Exchange parish (by the Bank of England) was so long derelict that the churchwardens, in 1670, forbade to list the names of their parish householders, "being so few inhabited in our time we thought it prudence to leave it to the succeeding churchwardens," they explained.

London remained for a decade, and then for a second decade, a City marked all over with ruins. About them the wild flowers grew, and notably the plant *Sisymbrium Irio* flourished in such profusion that ever since the Great Fire it has borne the popular name of "London Rocket," then first given to it. Aubrey, a passing visitor, mentions particularly the *Ericoluri Neapolitana* as peeping up amidst the destroyed houses. It clustered in masses about the south side of St. Paul's, and the seeds, wind borne, brought into blossom the little yellow flower showing itself high on the very top of the ruined Cathedral's tower Nature, in her

mothering mood, thus toiled to cover over the work of the flames.

Four years after the Fire the area rebuilt and on which rebuilding was well advanced was little more than one-half of that over which the flames had passed. If it be sufficient that eighty-four churches destroyed in the Fire were still in ruins, no one having been rebuilt, and in few cases had even the shattered walls been cleared away; the Guildhall, Custom House, Newgate, Ludgate, and other public buildings still unfinished; St. Paul's a waste, wherein Wren had not yet laid the foundations of the new Cathedral; the City Companies for a large part still without their Halls—then only can London in the year 1670 have been considered a magnificent City.

The blackened area lay out like the crater of a volcano, and as dead, broken walls leaning against rubbish heaps of loose stone and brick and charred timber. Not a roof was visible. In Hollar's view of London after the Fire there is rarely a building shown with its walls above the first floor still erect, the remainder having toppled over. Everything living had fled. Then a wonderful thing happened. Four days passed, and in all the fields stretching away to Highgate, Islington, and Hackney, in which the homeless people, with the goods they had saved from the flaming City, had found refuge under the stars, there was scarcely a man, woman, or child to be seen. The King in Council had ordered the churchwardens, overseers, and constables to lodge such people, first in vacant houses; then, especially the sick and women expecting child-bed, in victualling

houses, inns, and places of public entertainment; and others in private houses, taking care that such persons as had means should pay for their lodging. For the needs of the poor his Majesty promised funds. This packing proved temporarily effective.

The common disaster awakened an abounding charity The population closed in. The King sent tents from the Army. Lean-to wooden structures, hastily put together, were set up in the Artillery Ground at Finsbury, at Moorfields, in the Round at Smithfield within the rails, and on the bridge and vacant land by its foot at Southwark.

A mushroom town of sheds and tents sprang up in a few weeks, its greatest length drawn from the postern near Broad Street and outside London Wall to Moorgate, and within the Wall from Moorgate to Coleman Street. The burnt-out Londoners became for the time a gipsy population, camping in this manner about the outskirts of the fire-swept City till they could find better accommodation. Some families raised shelters on the ruins of their own homes. The destitute poor burrowed into vaults left secure when the buildings above had burnt, finding safe refuge from wind and rain, whence they came out to take the doles of charitable relief. The first shops opened after the Fire appear to have been at the Royal Exchange, broken stone and bricks from the Guildhall being carted there to form a pavement for the purpose, and others of the Exchange tradesmen by December had fitted up shops, both above and below stairs, in the already crowded precincts of Gresham House;

Fear arose of plague stalking afresh through desolated London. The great annual fair at Gravesend, customarily held on October 13th, was prohibited by Royal Proclamation lest travellers thereto might bring the infection from places where it still lingered.

The huge aggregation of ruins, stretching out for more than a mile, created a difficulty which left the City authorities powerless. London after the Fire was infested with thieves. Hundreds of houses had collapsed with much valuable property still in them, lying loose amid piles of charred timber and heaped bricks and stones. The flames had consumed a vast deal, but not all. Many citizens when the Fire approached had sought safety for their valuables by burying them in cellars or under the flagstones of their yards. The quantity of plate, money, jewels, household stuff, goods and merchandise discovered was very great, and much of it had been quickly misappropriated. A delegation of Aldermen waited upon Monck, and a further Royal Proclamation was published commanding all persons who either "wilfully, ignorantly, or of purpose," during the confusion had so appropriated property to bring the same within eight days to the Armoury in Finsbury Fields.

"In the deluge of rich commodities," says Clarendon significantly, "there were found men ready enough to fish." Not the thieves of London alone, many as they were numbered, were attracted by the prospects of spoil and the withdrawal of the little policing that sufficed in Stuart days. The parish constables and watchmen were common sufferers with their neighbours in the

Fire—all of them homeless, mostly having their own affairs claiming urgent attention. When wanted they were abroad, and the thieves made free. Bad characters from the suburbs, the outlying villages and distant towns flocked into the City, ostensibly to get work, in reality to prey upon unguarded London The Lord Mayor issued a Proclamation on November 3rd, for the punishment "of vagrants and sturdy beggars, loose and idle persons, who greatly abound, wandering in and about the streets of London and amongst the ruins of this city," commanding the Aldermen forthwith to cause a substantial pair of stocks and a whipping post to be set up, each in his ward.

Fires, incendiary in origin, broke out among the ruins, or in houses newly built or then building, keeping Londoners with vivid memories of the Great Fire in a state of tense nervousness.[1] A further Mayoral Proclamation on the 24th June, 1668, recalls reports of frequent thefts and robberies committed in the devastated parts of the City. It charged the Aldermen, in his Majesty's name, to see that good and sufficient night watches be set in each ward and at the City gates. The Bridewell Governors after the Fire, as their first duty, built

[1] "Sir John Robinson and others this day, where I was in the afternoon, do tell me of at least six or eight fires within these few days; and continually stirs of fires, and real fires there have been, in one place or other, almost ever since the late great fire, as if there was a fate sent people for fire." (Pepys's *Diary*, 1667, May 5; see also 1668, June 19.) The Insurance Office for Houses in 1680 reported ninety-seven houses burnt in the City and Liberties since the Great Fire, forty of these, however, being in the one outbreak in the Temple.

on their site with all speed prison rooms for men and for women—the evil characters they made their unwilling guests. There was ever present a danger from falling walls. The tottering steeples of St. Martin Vintry and St. Margaret Moses were forthwith pulled down, and the City Surveyors were ordered to examine and certify for demolition all steeples and parts of the damaged churches that threatened to fall, to the hurt or destruction of passengers.

Pepys and a party, coming home from the play a year after the Fire, found the City gates closed, as was customary after dark. "At Newgate we find them in trouble, some thieves having this night broke open prison. So we through, and home; and our coachman was fain to drive hard for two or three fellows, which he said were rogues, that he met at the end of Blowbladder Street, next Cheapside." In April, 1668, when entering into the ruins by St. Dunstan-in-the-East, he was met by two ruffians armed with clubs, who came towards him, and he describes himself as wearily walking round the City Wall in order to escape the dangers within.

Life itself was held in peril in these desolate streets. James Hickes, the postmaster, then lodging at Bishopsgate Street, in the fringe of the City left unburnt within the Wall, writes in a private letter three months after the Fire—

"There are many people found murdered and carried into the vaults amongst the ruins, as three last night, as I hear, and it is supposed by hasty fellows that cry 'Do you want light?' and carry links; and that when they catch a man single, whip into a vault with him,

knock him down, strip him from top to toe, blow out their links, and leave the persons for dead; and an apothecary's man in Southwark, coming into Fenchurch Street, being so served and being left for dead, when these villains had done [they] struck fire with a tinder box which they took out of their pockets, lighted their links, and away, and by glimpse of their lights, as the story goes, the man perceived a dead body lying by him in the said vault. When the murderers were gone, the young man made shift to get out, from whom this relation is spread, and a woman dead in the vault was found. For want of good watches, no person dare, after the close of the evening, pass the streets amongst the ruins."

The occasion demanded a victim, for the excited populace, inflamed with hostility to foreigners and Papists and distracted by their losses, were little inclined to reason coldly. One was quickly found. Among the Frenchmen apprehended and sent to Southwark was Robert Hubert, who had been seized at Romford, in Essex, when apparently making his way to sea to fly the country. Hubert was a watchmaker, who had practised his craft in London and in his native city of Rouen, where his father was a watchmaker of good standing. The son was twenty-six years of age. Those who had worked with him at the bench both in London and Rouen regarded him as a man of disordered mind. There was nothing against him save his self-accusation.

Hubert told a remarkable story. He said that four months before the Fire he left France in company with one Stephen Peidloe, and they went into Sweden, remain-

ing there until they sailed together for England in the Swedish ship *Skipper*. The vessel moored in the Thames, by St. Katherine's Tower, below the Bridge, and he stayed on board till the night when the Fire broke out. Peidloe then took him ashore. They walked by the wharfs to Pudding Lane, and arrived at Farynor's, the baker's, Peidloe confided to him that he had brought three fireballs, and gave him one of them to throw into the house.

Hubert protested, but Peidloe would not listen; and then, at his companion's instigation, Hubert said he placed a fire-ball at the end of a long pole, and, lighting it with a match, put it in a window, and stayed till the house was in flames. Farynor, the baker, while confident that his house was maliciously fired, afterwards declared there was no such window as Hubert described, nor did the fire start thereabouts. In this testimony he was supported by his son and daughter.

The man was tried at the Old Bailey October Sessions, before Lord Chief Justice Kelyng, on an indictment of felony in setting fire to the baker's house. There he varied his story, declaring that he had been suborned to set London on fire when in Paris a year before. There were three-and-twenty accomplices in his original narrative, with Peidloe as chief. They dwindled to three. They had come over together to England to put the plan into execution at the time of the Plague; but he and two of his companions went into Sweden, returning at the latter end of August, and he then resolved to undertake it. His two companions had escaped to France. He covered himself with con-

tradictions. He asserted that his sole reward for a service of so much hazard was a pistol, but he had been promised five pistols more when he had accomplished his work. Obviously the man was mad.

The only remaining testimony that could be said to bear upon the accusation was that of a French merchant, one Graves, living in St. Mary Axe. Graves asserted that he had full knowledge of Peidloe (who never appeared in the flesh) and knew him to be a most debased man, apt to any wicked design. Also he had known Hubert since a child, and had observed him to be a person of mischievous inclination, fit for any villainous enterprise. He had visited Hubert in prison, and for better discovery of the truth had affected disbelief in his confession. To this Hubert replied, "Yes, sir, I am guilty, and have been brought to this pass by the instigation of Monsieur Peidloe, but not out of any malice to the English nation, but from desire of a reward which he promised me on my return to France."

The Court was clearly dissatisfied. It possessed the knowledge that Hubert's first information, delivered to Cary Harvie, the justice at Romford who examined him on his arrest, was that "when the City was on fire" Peidloe sent him ashore to throw a fire-ball near the King's Palace at Whitehall, which he did; the story that he started the Great Fire at Pudding Lane he had enlarged when brought to London. Yet the evidence could not be put altogether aside, and a course was decided upon by which, pretty plainly, it was hoped that the self-accused man might, out of his own mouth, be made to prove himself an impostor. Hubert was

asked if he cou'd tell the place to which he first applied fire. He answered that he knew it well, and would show the house to anybody. It was directed that the prisoner should be taken near to the ruins, and asked to point out the spot.

First he was conveyed to the Thames-side, and he indicated the moorings by St. Katherine's Tower at which the Swedish ship lay. This part of his testimony was flatly contradicted by neighbouring wharfingers, who had no knowledge of any such vessel having berthed there. Incidentally, Hubert again varied his story, asserting this time that while he had himself sent one fire-ball into Farynor's house, Peidloe, using a long pole, had thrust two others through the same window.

The terrific heat of the fire had left nothing save charred timbers and debris piled high above the site of the baker's house. Pudding Lane was no longer recognizable, and without some distinguishing mark even its late residents could scarcely identify their ruined homes. It seemed likely that Hubert would fail; instead, he withstood the test only too well for the satisfaction of his judges. A guard of substantial citizens and John Lowman, keeper of the White Lion Gaol—the Surrey county prison—went with the prisoner. Lowman's deposition ran:

From thence [Thames-side] I carried the said Robert Hubert to Tower Hill, and did then desire him to show me the house that they did fire, and he said that it was near the Bridge. So we went along Thames Street towards the Bridge; but before we came to the bridge the said Robert Hubert said, that the house was up there

(pointing with his hand up Pudding Lane). So I bid him go to the place, and he went along the bricks and rubbish, and made a stand: Then I did ask one Robert Penny, a wine porter, which was the baker's house, and he told me that was the house where the aforesaid Robert Hubert stood. So I went to Robert Hubert, and stood by him, and turned my back towards the baker's house, and demanded of him which house it was that he fired, (directing to other houses contrary to that house) but he, turning himself about, said, "This was the house (pointing to the baker's house) that was first fired." Then by reason of his lameness, I set him on a horse, and carried him to several other places, but no other place he would acknowledge; but rode back again to the baker's house, and said again "That was the house" (pointing to the baker's house).

Not only did the man always return to the site, but he described how the house stood, the shape of the little yard, and the fashion of the door and windows.

"They were surprised with wonder, and knew not afterwards what to think," observes Clarendon. No man accused him, but Hubert himself silenced all doubts. The jury found him guilty, and he was hanged at Tyburn. He died, it was said, re-asserting his guilt,[1] and, declaring

[1] It was commonly asserted that Hubert maintained his guilt to the last; but the writer of a news letter to Sir Edward Mansell, 1666, Oct. 20th (now among the State Papers), declares that he denied the fact at the gallows. For Hubert's statement to Harvie see *London's Flames*, 1679. Petersen's affidavit is printed in *A Protestant Monument of the Whiggs and Dutch*, 1713; the evidence before the Parliamentary Committee in *A True and Faithfull Account*, etc., 1667; the true bill against Hubert is in the Guildhall archives.

that he was a Catholic, was confessed and absolved by the Queen's Confessor, though there is much evidence that not only was he a Protestant, but that in a most pronounced form—namely, a French Huguenot. The Lord Chief Justice told the King that all his discourse was so disjointed that he did not believe a word of it. Charles discreetly failed to interfere. The whole episode is a melancholy example of the ineptitude of the authorities when confronted with a man who persistently protested his guilt, and of a populace, deeply moved, who saw in the ruins of London the handiwork of malicious Papists, and in this self-accused madman the instrument of their dreadful deed.

The man was hurried out of existence before the whole truth could be known; but Hawles's statement that when the Parliamentary Committee required his evidence they found him already hanged, and so could tell no further tales, is contrary to the fact. It afterwards transpired, by testimony of Petersen, the master of the ship which brought him from Stockholm, that Hubert did not go ashore in London until two days after the Fire began, by which time the baker's house, the source of all the catastrophe, was already a public show. Clarendon wrote of him: "And though no man could imagine any reason why a man should so desperately throw away his life, which he might have saved though he had been guilty, since he was only accused upon his own confession; yet neither the judges nor any present at the trial did believe him guilty, but that he was a poor distracted wretch, weary of his life, and chose to part with it in this way."

The Fire of London was in fact accidental. The Council of State found that the outbreak was due to "the hand of God upon us, a great wind, and the season so very dry." That judgment has held good for two and a half centuries, and will not now be displaced.

The Monument erected by Wren that stands on Fish Street Hill, one hundred and thirty feet west of the spot where the Fire broke out, need not be described here. Associated with it is Pope's well-known couplet—

> Where London's column pointing at the skies,
> Like a tall bully, lifts the head, and lies—

but it is not always recalled that the passage which inspired this indignant protest, declaring that the Fire was "begun and carried on by the treachery and malice of the Popish faction," formed no part of the original inscription. Until June, 1681, the column properly fulfilled its purpose, as stated in the Act of Parliament that authorized its erection, "the better to preserve the memory of this direful visitation." Only after the perjuries of Titus Oates, who declared that eighty Jesuits, friars and priests had been engaged in the firing of London, and the disclosures of the so-called Popish Plot had again roused Protestant feeling in the City to frenzy, did the Common Council order the words to be engraved around the plinth of the lower pedestal.

The words were obliterated soon after the accession of James II, but were incised yet deeper when William and Mary were called to the Throne, and they were not finally removed from the Monument till the year 1830.

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